

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC
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Back from the void

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Keith Rowe in Central Africa

Maxime De La Rochefoucauld

Rhythm And Sound

Gary Lucas on Florian Fricke

Keiji Haino's all night flight

Laub

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Fog



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Lyric Sheet Now on Domino



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Editor's Idea

Words are our currency as much as sounds, and as The Wire enters its 20th anniversary year, a hell of a lot of them have flowed under the bridge since the magazine's foundation. Whenever I read that someone is 'utilising' a guitar rather than using one; that they have 'committed something to tape' instead of recorded it; that they are a 'art practitioner' instead of just an artist, or that their first self-titled attempt on the hearts and minds of the public is 'eponymously titled'; whenever I read that someone is 'woodshedding', that they are 'peeling off locks', or 'committing something to tape', where that something happens to be their latest 'outing', I reach for my red pen. But the thing that makes me call up a priest, order the last meal and ship in the blindfold, is what a certain world leader might call 'overstabilisation'.

The poor old President, with his transformationings and his misunderstandings and his logic behind the rationale, is the most public offender of the moment. But let's not pretend that any of us, even those who contribute to these pages, are guilt-free. Dealing with complex and difficult music, trying to walk the line between letting its mystery speak for itself and opening

it out to readers who haven't actually experienced or heard it at first hand, is bound to lead to a critical language that occasionally makes the umpties of sense cry 'Out!'. Academic New Media treblespeak makes writing about music highly, er, problematic. Music raises intelligent questions elegantly, and should be addressed and written about in the same spirit and register, but where the dialectic takes over and starts erasing fact, there we must draw the line. Last year I received an invitation to speak at an Austrian conference on the relationship of visual and video art with digital music and sound. Unfortunately I couldn't decline the invitation. Here's a sample paragraph:

"What manifests itself as cultural process, shows itself also in the form of a systematic change. After the orientation of the new art towards music, the digital world effectuates the transgression of the mechanistic: the dominating 'sign of things' disappears; the 'auditory-logic' is at least added. The sound as mediating, medial 'visionary' – a productive paradoxon." Well, would you have gone?

This month's issue focuses on several musicians whose contributions have been hugely significant, but

because they have chosen to remain below the radar since, they have gone relatively unrecognised. Memory tends to be enshrined only in product these days: if you're not on the shelves you ain't going nowhere. So Gordon Mumma's pioneering live electronics now appear with wonderful freshness and his example appears to offer one solution to the problems faced by static computer musicians. The howling intensity of that flea Fiona Flocke's Werner Herzog soundtracks stand as a solid epitaph, even though his latterday reputation and recent low-key releases had become diffuse. And Richard Hell, the punk iconoclast whose song 'Blank Generation' predated The Sex Pistols' 'Pretty Vacant' by as much as two years, seemed to have expended all his adrenalin on music, turning his hand instead to writing literature and making or appearing in films.

But just to prove there's life beyond words, from this month we introduce a new 'comic' strip inked by our artist in residence, that very productive paradoxon Savage Pencil. You'll find it, livening up the Directory, on page 92.

ROB YOUNG

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Editor-in-Chief & Publisher Tony Hemsing
publisher@thewire.co.uk

Editor Rob Young editor@thewire.co.uk
Reviews Editor Chiv Bohn reviews@thewire.co.uk
Assistant Editor Peter Shapiro

Projects & Web Editor Anne Hide Neeset
projects@thewire.co.uk

Advertising Manager Andy Tait

ads@thewire.co.uk (7422 5014)

Advertising Production Slim Smith

design@thewire.co.uk

Subscriptions & Administration Ben House, Phil England
subs@thewire.co.uk (7422 5022)

Art Direction & Design Kjell Ekholm, Jon Forss
info@ekhomedesign.com

Intern Ruth McNeil

2nd Floor East
88-94 Wentworth Street
London E1 7SA UK
Tel +44 (0)20 7422 5010
Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011
info@thewire.co.uk
www.thewire.co.uk

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3rd Floor East
88-94 Wentworth Street
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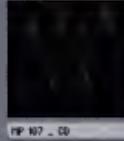


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Don Letts

Pressure point

With reference to Don Letts's *Invisible Jukebox* (*The Wire* 215), I would just like to point out that the vocalist with London Underground wasn't Mark Stewart but Pete Holdsworth, who now runs the Pressure Sounds label (that's him on the cover shaking the snow from his book). Lovely to see mention of two of the wonderful Dn-U Sound '10' singles though – thanks. Now, how about a feature on Adrian Sherwood, who I hear is readying five albums for release?

Richard Davies Solihull, UK

Wheeler dealer

So Steve "mastered the art of the early 1980s music deal" (Gabriel Voltaire feature, *The Wire* 215)? Tell that to Coil, who were signed to Some Bizzare in the early 80s and have yet to receive a penny from the CD releases of their albums from that time.

Richard Rees Jones Brighton, UK

No Marx for Watson

I mostly enjoyed reading the *Clubs*' Pros & Cons piece (2001 Rewind, *The Wire* 215), but have a couple of comments about Ben Watson's. I waited a few days to calm down a bit, but I'm still annoyed about his comment: "9/11 used as an excuse for US imperial ambitions in Middle East; widespread ignorance of America's murderous foreign policy all through the 20th century". If Mr Watson is allowed to use these "word bytes" in your magazine, he should follow them up with the facts. I suspect that his extravagant words spring from his own political point of view, which I could partly discern from the references to Marxism in the Pros section. But to sprinkle his poisonous petals without further explanation does a disservice both to himself and to your readers. He's certainly entitled to state his opinions, even political ones, in your mostly music oriented magazine. I doubt if he has anything new to

say that balanced readers of history and politics of the 20th century don't already know, but if he does, let him share it with us.

Jeff Capshaw New York, USA

Spontaneous correction

Two reviews of Emanem CDs in *The Wire* 215 need commenting on:

1) Ben Watson finds it paradoxical that in my sleeve notes I should state that the music on the Burn/Butcher/Davies/Edwards CD *The First Two Gigs* was performed without loudspeakers, when one has to listen to the resultant CD at home through loudspeakers. But that is precisely the point – if I want to listen to loudspeakers, I can stay at home rather than go to a gig!

His quote, Pierre Boulez's academic remark that any recording is electronic music, is neither here nor there. My aim in making a CD of non-electric (or any other) music is generally the same as a producer of a Tchaikovsky recording, namely to make it sound as similar to the original as possible (when reproduced on reasonable equipment) – to try and make the recording/reproduction process inaudibly transparent. Maybe I consider the culprit to be the pickup mic (or whatever they are called these days), which inevitably perverts the sound of instruments, especially strings. I generally much prefer the sounds without the contact mics, but I am not dogmatic – witness the several Emanem releases featuring various types of amplification and/or electronics.

2) Whoever reviewed the Spontaneous Music Orchestra Plus Equals reissue (Ben Watson again – Ed) did not read the sleeve notes or look at the photo, and did not listen closely. There are 21 musicians on the St John's Smith Square performance (not ten, as stated in the review), and an unknown number on the Little Theatre Club piece (not necessarily 23).

Otherwise, thanks very much for the reviews.
Martin Davidson Emanem Records, London

The amateur view

In your review of Klaus Beyer's *Hauptmann Pfeffers Einsamer Herzclub* (Size Matters, *The Wire* 215), you described him as "doing just fine in his first job as a Berlin based film maker". In fact, Beyer has always had a very straight job as a wax factory worker until he was made redundant a couple of years ago. In his spare time, yes, he has always been a dedicated Beatles fan, translating their lyrics into German, for himself and for his mother, as well as making Super 8 films and going to with them – crude but lovely animations, him singing the songs in an impromised set in the living room, or a mixture of both. Some of his work has since been compiled into an album, a book, a TV documentary, live shows, etc. etc. (And a fan club: I have an "I love Klaus Beyer" lighter in my possession!) The fact that he is basically a fan, amateur, and not a dilettante artist playing naïve, remains true to this day, and that is a very important factor in appreciating his body of work and the aesthetics (or non-aesthetic) therein.

Akiko Hada Berlin, Germany

Gratuitous pops

Richard Pinnell's reply (Letters, *The Wire* 215) to my earlier letter concerning the criticism of certain readers managed to sidestep the issue and further demonstrate some of the problems in the process.

We get to read that Radiohead aren't perfect – who is? – but why does he bother? My letter had nothing to do with personal musical preferences, and everything to do with the possibility that an artist might be able to enjoy free creative expression without being pigeonholed or sniped at by people seeking to inflate themselves at the expense of others. Still, Richard's letter doubles as a vehicle for a few more gratuitous pops at the group, waffling on about "confused mess", "I'll thought out", "impotent guitar rock" and "generic indie-by-numbers". Who asked you for that, Richard, and why do you think that attending school with some

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Bitstream

News and more from under the radar.
Compiled by The Trawler

Gone but not forgotten: Gareth Williams (left) with This Heat

Health and deficiency: **Gareth Williams**, This Heat's keyboard player and bassist, died of complications from cancer on the morning of 24 December 2001 aged 48. Williams was a member of the British avant rock group from 1976 until they broke up in 1980. After This Heat disbanded, Williams extensively studied South Indian dance and music, and released a limited edition cassette in 1985, *Flaming Tunes*. A memorial concert is to be held in London this month: see *Out There*. We are also sad to report that **Juan Gavira Esquivel** went off to relax in the great space age bachelor pad in the sky on 3 January. The Mexican muchacho of exotica was 83 years old and died after a succession of strokes he suffered in October and December. +++ **Holy Cowell: Essential Cowell**, Selected Writings On Music By **Henry Cowell**, a collection of the 'tone cluster' composer's writings on music theory and history as well as reviews and interviews edited by Fluxus member Dick Higgins, will soon be published by McPherson & Co. If you happen to be in upstate New York on 23 February, there's a launch party at Deep Listening Space in Kingston, with discussions and performances from Kyle Gann, Richard Terletzki and Sonny Hays. +++ A stitch in time: This month New York's venerable avant venue, the **Knitting Factory**, celebrates its 15th anniversary with a month-long schedule of performances. Ten per cent of the box office receipts will go to the Music For Youth Foundation. Info at www.knittingfactory.com. +++ Bluejeans and moon beams: As part of the Kat's celebrations, the **Captain Beefheart Project** will honour the contributions of Don Van Vliet on 9 February. The event will play host to the American debut of Fast 'N Bulbous, the instrumental tribute group featuring

guitarist Gary Lucas and conducted by Phillip Johnston, a screening of rare footage of Beefheart And The Magic Band, and The Wim's Mike Barnes reading from his celebrated Beefheart blog (which is due to be published in the US by Cooper Square Press). +++ **Oh Cecilia**: The British Library's map of the UK's music resources went online on 11 January. The database, called **Cecilia**, includes information on printed music and audio collections, concert programmes and memorabilia, autographed scores, archives of jazz and popular music, and collections of musical instruments. Check the site at www.bl.uk. +++ **Soul collision**: Two of experimental dancefloor electronica's biggest names re-emerge this spring with new albums. The third installment in **Thomas Brinkmann's** Soul Center series of recontextualised funk and soul records will be released on 25 March on Novarume. The two previous Soul Center albums came out on Brinkmann's own WMB Enterprises label. Meanwhile, **Super Collider**, aka Christian Vogel and Jamie Lidell, are back with their trademark 'If George Clinton and Kraftwerk were stuck in an elevator full of molasses with only a sequencer for company' sound after an almost three year hiatus with a new album, *Raw Digits*, set to be released in May on their new label, *Rise Robots Rise*. +++ **UPICulious**: **Iannis Xenakis** composed four pieces of electroacoustic music using the UPIC (Unité Polyacoustique Informatique du CEMAMU), a machine that allowed music to be composed through the act of drawing, two of which can be found on *Musique Electro-Acoustique*, a new release from Fractal, which unearthed the composer's *Persepolis* in 2000. *Pour La Paix* is a previously unreleased, 26 minute work concerning the horrors of war, completed in 1963;

Voyage Absolu Des Univers Andromède, meanwhile, was first performed on 1 April 1989 at the Kamigama Honotokuji Temple in Hinode, Japan for the opening ceremony of the International Exposition of Paper Kites. +++ **Award tour**: Korean composer and *komungo* virtuoso **Jin Hi Kim** has recently won two prestigious prizes for her work. Kim received the John Cage Award for Music Composition (an unrestricted \$24,000 grant) from the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Art and the Wolff Ebermann Prize from the International Theater Institute for her multimedia performance *Dong Dong Touching The Moons*. +++ **Immeasurable equations**: **Phælos Books** has recently published *Sun Ra Collected Works Vol 1: Immeasurable Equation*, which includes the bulk of **Sun Ra's** 1972 treatise on philosophy, mathematics, the cosmos and poetry, *Immeasurable Equation II: Extensions Out*, as well as an essay by the book's editor, Adam Abraham (son of Alton Abraham, who ran Ra's label, *Satum Research*), photos and unpublished art work. More information is available at www.phælos.com. There are even more stargazing in the *Sun Ra cosmos*, as Peter Hinds's *Sun Ra Research* publishes its annual compendium, *Sun Ra Book 2003*, in March. More info at www.sunraresearch.com. +++ **Freddie Frith** at my hamster: **Guata**, improvisor **Freddie Frith**'s out of print back catalogue originally released by the Swiss label, *Rec Rec*, will be available again on a new imprint from *ReR Megacorp*, *Fred Records*. First out of the box in February will be his classic *Gravity* and the new *Accidental* (*Music For Dance Volume 3*). Other material scheduled to be released includes records by *Skeleton Crew* and *Massacre*. Info at www.eermegacorp.com. ..

Death Row

How would Lydia Lunch spend her last day on Earth?

You are allowed...

Three records

Silence, please. The sounds of my own thoughts echoing around my cerebral cortex would drown out my symphony, for no matter how long I live, or how soon I die, I will still be arguing for justice, screaming for equality, protesting war and celebrating my life.

One film

A video projection of my last death drawing from my lips, as I blow a kiss to whatever awaits

One book

A blank notebook, scrawling illegible and mysterious missives filled with the poetry of death and longing.

Three visitors

A visitor passes to my deathbed. By that time I will be so sick of human beings that the greatest gift they will afford me is their absence.

Last meal

Grilled baby octopus, artichoke hearts, crab claws, lobster tails, absinthe and belladonna.

Final message for the world

Stop Wasting Your Time. Do It Yourself. Don't be so damn selfish. Recognise how fucking spoiled you are. Quit whining. Get real. Appreciate every single second. Throw away the remote controls. Stay off the Internet. Go read a fucking book. Leave me out of it.

Music for the funeral

No funeral, thanks, save the plot of land, build an orphanage, taxidermy my body: insert voicebox, blast Górecki, Penderecki and The Stooges' first two albums. Pray for the living. □ **Lydia Lunch's Champagne, Cocaine And Nicotine Stains EP** is out this month on *Crippled Dick*.



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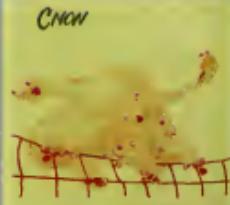
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EMOTIONAL CODEBREAKER.

BY PHILIP SHERBURNE

Thanks for the sharing: Laub's Anyte Greie-Fuchs

In the autumn of 2000, Anyte Greie-Fuchs – the singer and co-producer of the German group Laub – was in San Francisco for a solo performance and lecture at The Rooms For Listening festival. While strolling through the city with friends, a street musician approached her looking for a dollar or two, and began reciting rhymes. Anyte listened politely. Then, unfazed, she blasted back with her own freestyle, in her native tongue, wrapping her characteristically hushed, guttural syllables around the cadences of American Hip Hop. The street musician walked away with a couple of bucks, but there was little doubt the German singer had won the battle. A few days later, when Anyte breathlessly expounded her love of boxing, showing off wry biceps that could easily trounce the average music journalist, another aspect of her quietly combative nature fell into place.

Fast forward to October 2001, where Anyte is gearing up for a very different kind of engagement. The London Sinfonetta is set to perform the work of Glaswegian composer Craig Armstrong, known for his arrangements for artists like Massive Attack and Madonna, in a Stockhausen tribute at the Barbican. If this weren't unusual enough, Armstrong – "a big fan of Laub, for some reason", according to Anyte – has asked the group's frontwoman to sing in his piece. Her response to the composer's lush orchestral arrangements is a deadpan reading of HTML script and fragments of German and English text, a sort of cyborg counterpart to his neoclassic excess. The Barbican is a radical change of venue for an artist accustomed to playing in clubs and cafés, and as the conductor introduces Anyte to the members of The Sinfonetta, the self-trained artist experiences an unfamiliar attack of stage fright. "I'm used to playing in pop bands, and with non-speaking Techno guys."

Anyte recalls thinking, "There's no way I'm going up on stage without my computer." And so she packs her Powerbook under her arm, props it open and proceeds to read the text for her performance directly off the screen, contributing a strangely detached human voice to the swelling strings around her.

Now, for Head Slash Bauch, her solo debut as AGF on San Francisco's Orthleng Musorik label, Anyte has extended the concept into an album, recording herself reading lines of code and then deconstructing them into a slice of broken syllables and bursts of breath. At first there's no 'sense' distinguishable in the 22 short tracks, discrete constructions that flow into each other like water through a series of lock gates. But as you listen further, the familiar language of tech support begins to bubble up: "Readme file", "bugfix", etc. It's the first time that Anyte has written lyrics – if you can call them that, folded as deeply as they are into the structure of the music – in a language other than German, but she says the move was natural, especially after a few years of immersing herself in digital sound software. "I've been reading so many manuals that I just started thinking and talking like this," she says. "Everybody's doing it, really, talking about humans as if they were computer systems." The songs on Laub's new album, *File Sharing*, reflect her more traditionally emotive lyric style, presenting highly charged images – two lovers using a moped through fields of lavender, for example – in spare, tight German verses. But the Head Slash Bauch tracks mirror another type of everyday language for many: that of technology and computers. "I always mix the two; I'm used to living in two languages," she says. (Indeed, she's speaking from Finland, where she's helped up to record with Ambient/Techno producer Vladislav Delay, having wrapped up the Laub album a few months

earlier.) "I'm reading manuals, I talk to friends in English and German alike. I'm not bothered by it – it's not something I decided to do." So for the AGF record, she treats language as an object both banal and radically strange, by "just listening to sound". And, indeed, on Head Slash Bauch, her approach strips much of the "language" out of music as well, choosing instead to focus on fluid abstractions that dissolve their structure at every turn.

"Before, I worked within a frame," explains Anyte of the process behind the record. "With AGF, I didn't care about accessibility. I wanted to do short pieces, not like a ten minute Ambient massacre, but lots more pieces, very close to one another. It came from playing live so much. For a year before I started recording, I had been playing and experimenting live, not aggressively but always looking for my own sound, and during that time I collected lots of material. I had all these pieces that happened more or less along those travels, and when I put together the album, I thought it would be good to keep them short."

"The borders in pop music are very rigid – things have to be in time, in a specific structure," she continues. "Even with Laub" – a group that embodies a sort of experimental pop sensibility – "we tried to break that, but pop is still very predictable. I didn't want to care about form or harmony or time signature – I didn't want to think about it. I just wanted to create sounds." It sounds like a naive approach, but the paradox of Head Slash Bauch is that there is a kind of logic submerged in the music. It's a nonverbal one, however, despite the fact that the tracks are quite literally marked up with text, scraps of a life lived on both sides of the display screen. □ AGF's Head Slash Bauch is released on Orthleng Musorik. Laub's *File Sharing* is out now on Kitty-Yo.



Letters

members of the group a very long time ago puts you in a position to deliver judgment? You may also have gone to school with someone who later became, say, a milliner – does that qualify you as an expert on the dairy industry? Name-dropping is elitism, too.

I also asked why Radiohead, but not Björk, should have been targeted for abuse. Richard replies that a comparison of their music is a complete mismatch. Of course it is. I wasn't writing about musical styles, but about the similarities of their career paths, status and creative approaches. My question remains valid.

Next, he explains that I might not understand the subject because he gets the feeling that I would have been reading *Select* magazine in 1993. It is pure elitism to attempt to belittle someone because they do not happen to share your taste in magazines. For the record, I know nothing of *Select*, and at the time of my alleged style crime I was bedridden and too seriously ill to read anything at all. Think a little before you make lazy assumptions.

Constructive criticism is always fine, but letters like Richard's tell us nothing about music and succeed only in revealing the sour side of the writer's nature. If you don't like someone's music, fine – look elsewhere. There are many other delights on offer. Better still, why don't you make your own? (and wait for the backlash...).

Pete Markham York, UK

The Radiohead correspondence is now closed – Ed

Poetic license

In David Keenan's article on Mercury Rev (*The Wire* 214), American poet Robert Creeley is characterised as a "New Englander associated with such 'language' poets as Ed Dorn and Charles Olson". The recently deceased Dorn would have been appalled with the appellation "language" poet. The long dead Olson would have had no idea what the term means. Robert Creeley is, indeed, a New Englander associated with Black Mountain poets Olson and Dorn; however, the so-called "language" school comes into play a few decades later in the unfolding story of contemporary American poetry. It's a minor point, but your magazine is so scrupulous in its attention to detail that I thought I might as well bring it to your attention. The funniest part is imagining what Dorn would have said about being identified as a "language" poet, a movement he made fun of.

Bill Bernaman via email

Cardew: no fun?

Re: the Cornelius Cardew article (*The Wire* 214). Yes, Cardew's early achievements are worth writing about, but I think it's a shame he renounced the avant garde. You can't be avant garde or even just weird because it

doesn't conform to Socialist doctrine? Old you ever listen to the absolutely joyless and stodgy music of his post-experimental work? It's just like church music. I might be cruel in saying this, but I can think of better martyrs than Cardew.

Lawrence J Patti Rochester, USA

I'm surprised the Cardew article didn't list his book *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism* in the bibliography. It lays out his political ideas clearly, and although it's no longer in print, it is available in libraries.

Bill Miles Chicago, USA

We listed material that is currently available. Cardew's book was referred to elsewhere in the article – Ed

Point of order

Richard Henderson's Primer on the Music Of Islam (*The Wire* 214) referred to Byrne & Eno's "My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts", which prominently sampled the Lebanese mountain singer Dounya Yousif. That is indeed the name by which that album's sleeve referred to the vocalist, but the *Music In The World Of Islam* LP from which they taped the vocals gave it as "Dounya Yums". It would be nice to believe that another spelling variation has caused other recordings of that incredible voice to be mislabeled in some obscure museum of ethnomusicology, but so much for wishful thinking.

In the same issue, Biba Kopf showed good taste in his review of the book *Hirschweide: Dene Jugend* by making special mention of Christo Haas's contribution to electronic new wave, but he implies that Haas has been silent ever since. In fact a new album, *Low* (credited simply to Christo), came out on the Tresor label a couple of years ago.

Kevin Busby Birmingham, UK

Techno arabesque

Two small points about *The Wire* 214...

In his introduction to *The Primer*, Richard Henderson describes the "shared attributes" of the music of Islam as "the penchant for abstraction...; lack of individuality...; repetition and symmetry; and arabesque". It struck me as being the exact definition of Techno. (*The "arabesque" factor* perhaps less obvious, but check "paxi-coxylin", the fifth track on Black Dog's *Spannars* album from 1995.)

And don't you think Björk looks strikingly like Michael Jackson in the photo on page B7?

Nicolas Schoener Paris, France

Psyched out

Is it just me, or does someone at your mag have a bias against British psychedelia? In *The Compiler*, the

Nuggets // box (*The Wire* 210), *Acid Drops*... (212), and the British Psychedelic Music collection on Normal Records (214) were summarily dismissed with a sneer. Granted, not everything on those collections is fantastic, but there is some great stuff. It makes me think the reviewer didn't even really listen to them. The reviewer dismissed the *Nuggets* // box as a bunch of careerists. Most of the bands probably had one 45 which disappeared early after release. What careerists! As for the collection on Normal, I haven't heard it yet, but the line-up looks interesting. Mark Fly is on it, and his disc from 1972 is one of the best acid folk/pysch rarities I've ever heard. Instead of continuing to give this type of music to the same person, could you please give them the latest fumble-fingered, endearingly naive Japanese twiddle, which will undoubtedly make them infinitely more happy, fulfilling their quest for a vague sense of "other".

James Kramer via email

Down with the Kid

After reading the *Kid606* article (*The Wire* 212) my impression of him is one of a naive, self-sabotaged kid. He discredits anything and/or anyone that is unlike himself, which is ignorant in my opinion. Just because things aren't a certain way for him doesn't mean it's invalid. It may be totally valid for someone else. He acts like he knows it all at age 22. He did have some good points, but mainly he came across as someone who cares about their image but tries to act like they don't, a "scamster".

Don Winblad San Diego, USA

Corrections

Issue 215 In 2001 Rewind, the reissue of *jaZig's Tengo N' Vectif* CD was mistakenly credited to Planet Mu. In fact, Rephlex was responsible for both the release and the original release.

In Print Run, the title of Peter Helczer's book of collected poetry was reproduced incorrectly. It is actually called *A Purchase In The White Botanica*.

In The Directory, the wrong contact for Hot Air was printed. The correct details are: F Orléans 832 7993, info@simplesampling.com, www.simplesampling.com D Cargo, Good Goods, Junor Mean Recordings' old details were also included by mistake. The new details are: Unit 75A, Regent Studios, 8 Anvers Road, London EB 4QN, info@autographbenf9.co.uk, www.autographbenf9.co.uk.

Issue 213 In the Jim D'Rouie article, Brise-Glace's *When in Vanitas...* and Yona-Kit's *Yona-Kit* were mistakenly referred to as being deleted. Both titles are still available from Skin Graft which is now distributed through Sheeshock. □

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CD LR 332 TAO (TACHIBANA, ACTIS DATO, CHITA) TOMORROW NIGHT GIG

With one ear tuned to the street and the other tipped towards his fanciful imagination, Carlo Actis Dato creates a musical universe of disjunctions and jump-outs while recording live with two Japanese musicians he met in 1999 — the remarkable bassist Yasuhiro Tachibana and violinist and vocalist Kessuke Otsu. Given the empathy and response line between the three, it is only appropriate that the first letters of their last names spell TAO. This 70-minute long CD is supplemented by the notes of the Down Beat writer Pepe de Barros.



CD LR 333 NOT MISSING DRUMS PROJECT FROHLICHE AVANTGARDE; THE GAY AVANTGARDE

The fourth release on Leo Records by Not Missing Drums Project led by Joachim Gege and Thomas Bohm-Christ with yet another change in the line-up: Ute Doring (mezzo-soprano), Alex Nowitz (voice, electronics), Matthias Bauer (voice, bass), Jörg Huke (trombone). Based on the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, the music of the "Gay Avantgarde" cannot be defined by a single style. The styles range from aural chamber music to intensive composition, improvisation to sound collage, and the music on this CD breaks through the usual barriers between genres.

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mactwo

About 15 years ago, a 23 year old Andrew Broder might have been sitting alone in his shiny apartment, nursing a Bud, inhaling mould spores, watching the silverfish crawl across the windowsill, half paying attention to Larry Zbyszko putting an arm bar on Stan "The Larfat" Hansen on the television while listening to *Sisters Of Mercy* and fellow Minnesotans Husker Du and The Replacements. Today, however, 23 year old Andrew Broder still sits alone in his shiny apartment, nursing a Bud, inhaling mould spores, watching the silverfish crawl across the windowsill, half paying attention to The Rock delivering the People's Elbow to Kurt Angle on the television while listening to Smog, a Beast Jukies mixtape and fellow Minneapolisians Eyedea and Abilities. Instead of dressing his post-adolescent bedsheet blues in black Lipsick and an army surplus trenchcoat, Broder gives this age-old condition a defiantly 21st century spin – cool enough to wear fat laces and a Rawkus skull, but still nerdy enough to need the security of a cardigan.

As Fog, Broder has just released what may very well become a defining musical statement among disgruntled twenty-somethings of a certain musical and intellectual disposition. Fog's self-titled debut album for Ninja Tune is, along with the prodigious output from the Anticon crew, perhaps the first album to link the "been there, done that" multi-musicality of the jaded PoPoMo art set to a fairly explicit social, psychological and maybe, even political statement. Pissed off with the world and his place in it, he uses the murk and bleak attitude of the contemporary music scene to heap scorn on it.

Broder grew up in suburban Minneapolis and spent his early adolescence in "NOFX sounding [punk] groups. Very silly, jokey kind of shit. I was in a band called Shampoo for a while, if that gives you any idea. It was straight edge. Totally dumb, but really, really fun... Seeking adventure and identity –

things absent in my suburban doldrums... I started DJing and doing graffiti."

Although HipHop was a diverting escape from the lit white "butts, after five or six years as a fully paid up member of the HipHop underground (including his role as part of the editorial team of a laugh-out-loud HipHop/graffi/raedill) satire zine which I'm not allowed to name because it has nothing to do with his music, but it has the same initials as a very well-known drug), Broder got sick of the orthodoxy and ditched his backward baseball cap and backpack. "I don't mean to be this 'I hate HipHop' guy," he says, "but I don't want what I do to be seen as reactive I want it to be proactive. That's why so much underground music is lousy, because it is reactive and self-conscious. So much of it focuses on what it is not, not what it is. I hope to be as far away from that as possible... In very basic terms, music is about telling your story, and a lot of turntable music, while aesthetically interesting and quirky, isn't the kind of music that I can identify with. It doesn't really speak to me on any level beyond 'that's an interesting noise'." So, you know, if we're gonna try to take all this turntable shit seriously as an instrument, not just a novelty, then we have to think in terms of making music tell a different story, one that is not "I am a good scratcher, check me out". Which is sort of the HipHop/DJ battle kind of way of looking at things. That stuff is great and inspiring, but it's sort of like figure skating... is my turntable playing based in HipHop? Yes. Do I think I am HipHop or do I care if HipHop heads, specifically, are into my music? Not really. The song "And Stay Out" is partially about the whole fitting into HipHop thing."

"And Stay Out" pretty much sums up Fog in a nutshell. Beginning with elegant piano chords, an Alberta Clipper of a scratch and a dusty, whining test tone, Broder sings in the most perfect of indie voices, "We've been trespassing but now we're through." The

song then proceeds to descend into a deconstruction of a HipHop beat like a more primitive Rhythm And Sound. The rest of the album finds Broder collaborating with American's Osele One (who gives a shout-out to "all the quitters"), creating frostbitten atmospheres from his turntable and dotting this tundra with fragments from the daydream nation: the acoustic guitar part of "Pneumonia" is strangely reminiscent of Sonic Youth's "Schizophrenia" and the guitar samples on "Fool" definitely take the Xpressoid to yr skull. "I'm very 'first-take,'" he says of the album's creation. "A lot of the songs just started by doing some drums or some noise and then building the songs around that... But as far as moods and images, I always look at that as something that will surface no matter what as long the sounds you make are coming from a pure place. Even if the structure of a song isn't fully defined when you start making it, by the time you finish, it will become apparent. Like, I'll do a drum pattern on the turntables and then a month later write a guitar part or words that fit it perfectly, down to the measure, and I'll think to myself, 'That must have been meant to happen' or maybe it was in my head all along, it just all didn't realize itself at the same time, but it was always there. But the mood, image, idea and sound are the most important things, not the tools you use to create them."

The pervading moods of Fog is bleak, frigid and desolate. "Well, the winters here are really hard for me so that's produced some things to write about I suppose," Broder concludes. "My friend Chaka said something which I thought was right on, to the effect of Minneapolis just kind of keeps you running around in circles. There are wonderful people here and for its size there is, at times, a lot of good shit going on musically. But most people I know speak often of leaving. And I think those ideas of escape and/or boredom come across in what I write as well." □ Fog is out this month on Ninja Tune

FOG

BY ANDREW BRODER



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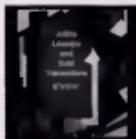
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MAXIME DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID BANTY



'Machines' of Maxime De La Rochefoucauld's Automates orchestra

"My music is not so much polyrhythmic as polygravitational," says Canadian composer Maxime Rioux, aka Maxime De La Rochefoucauld, of his mechanical orchestra of self-built 'automates', whose interlocking actions accumulate into ritualistic, trancelike rhythms described by their creator as "creating chaos with an order". When I reach Rioux's apartment for our interview, he tells me he only woke up five minutes earlier, but already his attention is transfixed by the tiny gadget he's fiddling with. It turns out that it's a component scavenged from the inside of an office thermostat — a Honeywell thermostat, to be exact. "A friend just gave this to me; they're very hard to find," he enthuses, like someone who's just stumbled onto a Shakespeare Folio. To the uninitiated it looks just like a thin spring with a mercury-filled glass bubble attached to one end. After ten minutes of explanation, during which Rioux repeatedly rocks the mercury back and forth inside the bubble to demonstrate something or other, I'm no closer to understanding exactly how this device will bring a technological quantum leap in his music. But given the importance of such electronic minutiae to his work, I'm prepared to believe him.

New Yorkers got a rare firsthand glimpse at the fruits of Rioux's obsession during the Montreal-based composer's recent residency there, when he put on a series of performances of his ongoing project, Automates XI, at various venues in the city. The 'Automates' (French for automotives) are an army of tiny robot-instruments rigged up in an impossibly complex tangle of wires, stands, beaters and primitive mechanical arms. Going out as Maxime De La Rochefoucauld, Rioux drives this array of soundmakers using simple, ultra low frequency (that is to say, inaudible) waves generated by an analogue synthesizer. Numbering about 40 for a full performance, the automotives consist mostly of drums, cymbals, and shakers of various sizes, as well as several toy mandolins and banjos. Excluding the occasional store-bought instruments, they're constructed from the booty of one hundred yard

sales: an assortment of bottles, thread spools, corks and bits of metal. Triggering them is a maze of weights, spindles, vibrating speaker-cones, makeshift driveshafts, and even used computer desks. Where the mercury-filled bubble will eventually fit in is impossible to say.

Yet it's all beautiful to behold, and clearly there's a degree of theatre involved in generating what he calls "an illusion of rhythm". Not surprising, as Rioux's background is in visual art (he has a degree in sculpture.) At live performances, audience members crane their necks favorably, trying to trace sounds to their sources and figure out what makes each automaton tick before it stops, another one somewhere else picks up the beat, and necks crane in a different direction. The modularity and mutability of his setup — which is put together by hand for each gig, a process that can take more than a day — allows him to place the automotives in a nearly infinite variety of arrangements. For example, during his New York residency, there was a traditional audience/stage setup at the jazz loft Roulette, while at the sound art gallery Diapason the automotives were scattered in an almost random pattern around the exhibition space, in front of and behind audience members and even, in a bit of extra-credit mischievousness, above door frames.

Unlike much process-oriented music, the Automates actually work well on record (and Rioux even provides photographs of some automotives as a helpful visual aid). The debut CD, *Automates XI* (Plastique, 1997), has somewhat recklessly been compared to electric Miles Davis; other reference points include Pierre Bastien, the French composer and builder of similarly bizarre hybrid instruments; and radical dub: think early Afrikan Head Charge. In spite of the tremendous sonic range of the automotives, the beats seem perpetually rootless, as if some important foundation instrument has been cut out of the mix, which of course isn't the case at all. Rioux/Rochefoucauld's first release also included live playing on heavily reverberated trumpets and keyboards, lending the tunes a nomadic, Middle

Eastern quality. In contrast, the recently released *Collection Somnambule (Music For Insomniacs)* has a more grounded feel, with less fugitive human accompaniment and reverb, and more of a focus on the crashing, cascading polyrhythms of Automates percussion. 'Other-worldiness' is a common description of Automates music. In fact, according to Rioux, people all over the world describe it as "foreign" or "alien" — from anywhere but "here". "When I performed concerts in Senegal," he says, "I brought only my mechanisms along, and hooked them up to native Senegalese instruments. And you know what? The locals said, 'It sounds like something from Sierra Leone'!"

Rioux is, of course, working within a long tradition of automaton music (player-pianos and music boxes, for example, as well as the more advanced mechanisms of Maurice Martenot, father of the ondes martenot, and Alvin Lucier). But unlike much of the music composed for automotives — where machines simply carry out the precise wishes of their composer masters — Rioux has a very high randomness quotient. He doesn't like the idea of keeping his automotives on a short leash and has no interest in "composing melodies". He recently bought a record of composed music for automaton violin and hates it. "No soul" is his only comment. The importance of 'soul' to Rioux is perhaps revealed by the name of his project: "XI" is a reference to Chinese chi or Japanese ki — the vital but invisible energy all around us. The sounds of his automotives are physical representations of unseen waves or energy. He certainly plays this up in concert, deep in thought as he routes mysterious, unheard sounds this way and that from his mixing console. But his mystical side is always tempered by a certain science-fair geekiness. A couple of minutes declaiming about the balance between chaos and order in the sonic manifestations of his waves, and he's inevitably back to talking like an engineer. "Now, if you look at this on an oscilloscope..." he begins. At which point he loses me again. □ *Collection Somnambule* is out now on Poul Poul. Website: www.homepage.mac.com/automatesxi

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Global Ear: Washington DC

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month: Chuck Bettis witnesses an upsurge of underground activity in the US capital



Washington post-everything: DJ Pasic, Richard Charter

Built to a Masonic design, Washington DC is a city that is a secret even unto itself. Depending on where you enter, you will encounter burnt-out buildings dating from the Martin Luther King Jr riots during the 60s, potholes, or the depressingly typical American urban ghetto. Constant surveillance has promoted a growing reticence among people involved in any kind of underground activity. Musicians here have no desire to get onto a major label – their sound is nurtured on sweat and blood. DC's reputation might be founded on its bygone punk and Go-Go years, but the recent upsurge of noise from the city's expanding community of experimental musicians is beginning to redraw the city's musical map.

A quick survey of DC's proliferating experimental activity takes in the Mass Particles collective (who've launched a Web label, Submass, and forged strong links with Baltimore's fertile scene); Metatron Press, John Matis's CD-R label; avant imprint VHF (whose roster includes avant folksters From Quagmire, and free noise trio The Ratio, whose guitarist Vinnie Van Go-Go also hosts www.dj-improv.com) and Crank Automotive (who feature Bruce Russell, Wye contributor Alan Light and Mikrokentys); and the Progressive/free jazz institution Cuneiform.

You'd never know it from reading the local press, but DC electronics is also going strong: local resident Richard Charter earned an honourable mention at last year's Phx Ars Electronica for his elegant minimalist releases on his pioneering digital "microsound" label Line and Taylor Deupree's 12k. Additionally, he has a sound installation at NYC's Whitney Museum; but whenever he's in DC, he keeps a low profile, despite releasing multiple CDs each year and organising a weekly Sunday night lounge called Filter, combining music and visuals. Despite being forced by arthritis to

change from guitar to computer, composer Alberto Gaitán has acquired an international reputation for his orchestral scores and sound sculptures. He also plays out with his "media band" id20+. The concept of beats isn't entirely alien to DC electronics. Mikrokentys are a duo who target their combination of analogue/digital electronics and violin more to the dancefloor than the concert stage, while John Rickman and Eric Bruns's EBSK use vintage SK-1 synths, clavinet and electronics to create beat orientated, Eno-style tracks that explore the Ambient end of circuit bending.

Unsurprisingly, Charter, Gaitán and others who make quiet, diffident musics are hardly what you'd describe as attention seekers. Artists coming out of the punk tradition, on the other hand, aren't so shy about getting right in your face. DJ Pasic aka Jeff Bagato says he is "exploring electronic sounds of love created by playing vinyl LPs with a handheld hacksaw". He also writes an underground art and music zine, fittingly titled Mole, and is part of Spaceships Panic Orbit, whose number includes members of Hot City Initiative. Equally in your face is 36, the project of former Nimrod drummer Sam Loman, co-founder of the Japan Overseas label. And my own digital project, Trance And The Arcade, is currently involved in real-time music, video and dance performances.

Out of necessity these DC artists are also promoters – well, nobody else is going to do it for them. Their DIY philosophy is partially a legacy of the city's free jazz and punk scenes, indeed, headed by the likes of Bad Brains, Minor Threat, Fugazi, SOA and Rites Of Spring, its 80s hardCore punk scene had a huge influence on the whole American underground that went way beyond music. Their work ethic, commitment to the local scene and student manifestos served as models for similar community-driven punk initiatives across the

United States.

The DC area's experimental outfitts and musicians still follow their example today. Orithrim are an amazingly prolific duo whose fusion of lightning fast guitar riffs and on-the-dime drumming suggests late period John Coltrane meeting Carl Stalling at a Death Metal summit. Last year they released six recordings on labels such as Hydraload, Troublemaker Unlimited and Toketta. But the real rush is the way Orithrim live run all their compositions together to create a dissonant yet transcendent sensation. The group's Josh Blair also doubles as the drummer in the DC/New York outfit ABCs. Then there's El Guapo, whose members have been known to moonlight with Anthony Braxton, CCM4 and ABCs. Using a drum machine, guitar, accordion, drums and vocals, their music is a weird blend of pop, club beats and 20th century avant garde.

Other DC mavericks of note include the Maya Deren influenced video artist and musician Amelia Saddington, who plays gypsy-style accordion with RaRaRa+Am, promotes the video art night Fast Forward and moonlights as a dancer in the performance troupe Domestic Tax Petal. Her fellow RaRaRa+Am member Frankie Vogl, meanwhile, is a "prepared" bassist who also sits in with experimental jazz, classical, and Metal musicians. But DC's hardest working outfit has to be All Scars, a self-styled "amoebo" New Music ensemble, made up of individuals who have variously worked in African pop groups, roadied for Fugazi and staged solo electronic shows, while running the Mass Particles label and a recording studio. Yet they still have enough energy left to devise a different set for every city they visit. □

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Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on – with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear



Joëlle Léandre

Tested by Dan Warburton. Photo by René Davila

French bassist, improvisor and composer
Joëlle Léandre has been a towering presence in contemporary classical and improvised music throughout the world for over a quarter of a century. After graduating with flying colours from the Paris Conservatoire, she played bass in France's leading New Music ensembles – L'itinéraire, 2E/2M and Ensemble InterContemporain (under Pierre Boulez) – as well as freelancing as an orchestral player (working with, amongst others, Leonard Bernstein and Lorin Maazel). She was one of the first bassists to commission a contemporary repertoire for the instrument, and composers as diverse as Giacinto Scelsi, Betsy Jolas, Aldo Clementi and Fred Frith have written pieces specially for her. In 1976 she won a scholarship to work in the United States, where she befriended John Cage, Morton Feldman, Merce Cunningham and Yvar Mikhashoff, who encouraged her to contact Scelsi. She became a close friend of the composer during the last ten years of his life, and released a definitive recording of his double bass music, *Okanagon*, on hat ART in 1993, five years after his death. She has recorded with a roll-call of contemporary figures including Anthony Braxton, Derek Bailey, Daunik Lazro, George Lewis, Paul Lovens, Evan Parker, William Parker, Irène Schweitzer and Sebi Tramontana, featuring on such labels as FMP, For 4 Ears, Hat Art, Intakt, Leo, Potlatch and Victo. The Jukebox took place in her flat in Paris, with two cats and a quintet commission sitting on her music stand nearby.

PIERRE BOULEZ

"POLYPHONIE X"

FROM POLYPHONIE X (COIL LEGNO) 1951, RECORDED 2000

It's not improvised. Not Schoenberg... it's less precise than Schoenberg.

Why do you say that?

In the flow of phrases, the mess, the ensemble writing. Very serial, very après-guerre. I don't know. [Looks at sleeve] Oh my God, it's Boulez. I don't know this piece. I must buy this.

He only agreed to have it released recently. It's one of Boulez's mythical, early orchestral total serial pieces from the early 50s.

I remember working with him. The man is rigid – but human, implacable. He argues, says 'Messieurs, dames, bonjour. We're going to work on page...' And you're off! You don't have time to breathe. His compositional rigour defined him as a conductor. I've played under Bernstein, Maazel... but nobody works you like Boulez. You don't find that any more.

Why did you choose the double bass as your instrument?

I didn't choose it, it chose me. I started with the piano, and our piano tuner told us about a wonderful bass teacher, Pierre Delocleuse, and persuaded my younger brother to take it up. Nine months later I took up the bass and he switched to piano. And we made music together. I love the expression 'make music' – music is something you make. I fell in love with this great, big, upright, impossible object. It was a challenge – it still is. I come from a working class family, I'm proud to say my father was a canioneer [roofer builder]. Musical education was always something associated with people of a higher class, with a certain culture, and I wanted to prove to my parents that I could do it. From the age of nine to 17 I worked at the instrument, studied at the Conservatoire in Aix-en-Provence, then passed the concours for the Paris Conservatoire, where I stayed for three years. I was polemical, critical, angry.

I already had doubts about the bass repertoire – I hate transcriptions of pieces written for violin, flute, etc. I heard Jacob Druckman's [1969 solo bass piece] *Valentine* – wonderful. I fell in love with the 20th century. A living music – enough of these dead composers, enough of the necrophilic! I was very young when I started playing contemporary music – it was in 1970, and I hadn't finished Conservatoire when I joined the ensemble L'itinéraire. I was one of the first bassists to commission a repertoire specifically for the bass – there are more than 40 works written for me. I played with the Ensemble InterContemporain, 2E/2M and freelanced as an orchestral player. At the same time, I was going to jazz clubs, but I didn't really get into black jazz until I went to the States in 1976.

JOHN CAGE

"SIX (THIRD TAKE)"

FROM SONG YOUTH: GOODBYES 20TH CENTURY (SILE 1991, RECORDED 1990)

[Listens attentively] It sounds like an improvisation by a group trying to play contemporary music. **Bravo.**

It sounds like an old piece, with all that percussion and electronics. It could be oriental. Fred Frith? [Looks at album] Oh, it's not Cage for me. It's not Cage at all. [Listens more] Well, yes and no. Cage gives you the freedom and the responsibility to redefine his thinking and his music. I find this very expressive, yet Cage spent much of his life campaigning against expressivity. Having said that, when Cage came to the Opéra Bastille to hear his *Europa 5*, about a year before he died, I was listening to the piano part with

him during rehearsals and it was very... almost romantic! I turned to him and said, 'There's a lot of malady, John.' He laughed that famous laugh of his and replied, 'Sometimes it does you good.'

Do you consider Cage's work to be completely different from European contemporary music?

No, not at all. Cage was never appreciated in Europe, people never listened carefully enough. Like Sabe, he wasn't taken seriously. He said to me before he died: 'Joëlle, I'm going to leave you, and I'm afraid that people haven't understood my music.' His music, not his thinking or his writing. He was one of the great figures of the 20th century, but first and foremost he was a musician. A composer! True, his thinking was very liberal: be yourself, indeed, go your own way, but before that you need to learn how to stand up. Cage gave me that sense of responsibility. They say he didn't like improvisation, but I don't believe that. He improvised a lot, but there was always something compositional, if only a stopwatch, a composer's ear to redefine things.

GIACINTO SCESLI

"HYMNO"

FROM HYMNO (IMODE) 1963, RECORDED 2001

[After ten seconds] Scelsi. The material, the fingerprints. Sound power. I can talk about Scelsi all day. Is this *Anahit*?

No, It's *Hymno*, scored for two orchestras from 1963, two years before *Anahit*. You had a special musical affinity and composer/performance relationship with the Italian. How did you originally meet him?

I came back from the States in 1978 and I was in Rome. I had his number and called him. He spoke impeccable French: 'Allô? Vous êtes qui?' I said: 'Je suis Joëlle Léandre, bassist, I'd like to meet you.' 'Vous venez quand?' I'm full of myself, you know! I've always been an action woman. Like when I met Cage, I went round to where he lived in Barik Street in New York and rang his doorbell.

Towards the end of his life Scelsi wrote a large number of pieces for female instrumentalists, including Carol Robinson, Michiko Hirayama and, of course, yourself. Why do you think he enjoyed working with women performers so much?

He claimed that women were more coherent and open with their sensitivity. Men tend to hide that. For him it was about bringing to life, giving birth to his music. His music is about birth, life and death. It's very profound. Only women can give birth. And if you're conscious of what it is to give birth you also know what it is to put to death. That is a universal conscience that women everywhere carry within them. Scelsi's music is something that affects you enormously, whether you're from Africa, the Himalayas or Burgundy. It's unique. It looks quite simple, but it's so difficult to play.

It was rumoured that much of his music was in fact written by his copyists.

I don't want to hear about that. Scelsi was very nice, of course. He could afford to pay others to help him. He certainly wasn't a card-carrying Communist, and his work was very badly received. He published his music himself for a long time. Maybe he did need a helping hand from others – so did Mozart, by the way. He was a great improviser, a fine pianist. He'd play the piano some evenings and record himself on his old Revox A 67, the rööre. There are some recordings of him improvising – I think Wergo has the tapes – which will be released someday. When you analyse the scores, especially some of the piano music, there's a sort of formal chaos there – it seems clear to me that those piano scores are improvisations that have been transcribed. Who by, I don't know. I don't know if that's the case for the quartets or the clarinet pieces, but

Invisible Jukebox

when you listen to the cello pieces, I'm sorry, it's definitely Scelsi who wrote everything.

How did he work with him?

He would come down in the early afternoon, work with us, and then disappear until the evening. We had dinner together, he had his litre of olive oil – the family fortune came from Sicilian olives. We sat in a room with a palm tree he used for meditation, with a painting by Picasio, or maybe a Di Chirico, on the wall behind him. And we worked. I'll never forget how long it took to find the right kind of cry, this scream I have to perform in Makonongan, and how he grabbed my arm: 'C'est ça!' He was always supportive and generous. When he sent me the score of *Martram* [for solo bass], he said: 'C'est un cadeau. Do what you want with it.'

Everyone goes on about how Scelsi didn't like Bach and Beethoven, but he had a sense of humour too – he could be a rogue when he wanted. Perhaps he was a bit odd, talking to birds in the street and that, but he was a genuine mystic. He'd had this accident and spent three years in a clinic, and he really learned how to concentrate, how to listen. He was the first (along with Ligeti, perhaps) to focus on the *écorce* [outer surface, bark of a tree, huk, rind] of sound.

In 1988 I went to Aix, and I called him, 'Jolli, I want to see you.' I went to him on 4 August. He died on the eighth. I was present when he died. I held his hand. I saw him go out... like a candle.

RADU MALFATTI

'DAS PROFIL DES SCHWEIGENS'

FROM DAS PROFIL DES SCHWEIGENS (TIMELESS 1998)

What's that sound? [After a long silence] Very Cagean. Is it MIDI percussion? It's electronic.

No, they're acoustic instruments. It's a string quartet.

What? If those are stringed instruments, I'll be damned. It's so metallic. [Listens intently] I give up. Who is it?

It's a quartet composition by Radu Malfatti written in 1997. The score stipulates different pieces on the instruments – the pegs, the tailpiece, the back, the bridge – but all the sounds are bowed.

I played with Radu back in the early 80s, in the Rue Dunois... even then he was quite into silence. This is extraordinary.

Today he says he can't stand most improvised music because it's too 'gabby', or busy. Do you agree?

It's not all like that – there are different 'schools'. Nobody really invents anything, you know. Things move a little bit, in terms of technology, certainly, but there's nothing really new. What's his name, with his trumpet, Axel Dörner, with his phhtphht phhtphht phhtphht... people were doing that 25 years ago. Radu was part of that. I can understand him getting tired of it. I couldn't: I never tire of improvising.

I have a important notion of what a musician is: the instrumentalist (the performer), the improvisor and the composer. The modern notion of what a composer is is very different from what it once was. Nowadays they study composition, that's all they do. They don't make music, they don't play instruments. In composition and harmony classes in music colleges you're not even allowed to touch a piano. It's all rules. Conservatoire equals conservative. It's very imperialist, colonial. But Europe's only a little bit of the world. What about Chinese music? Indian music? Arabic music, Indonesian music – that exists too. Go out and listen to African pygmy music like our friend Ligeti. That's improvised music too. I love jazz, and jazz musicians, though I don't consider myself one – I don't have the right background. Jazz is another appellation of improvised music. And improvised music existed

centuries ago. In Europe too. People came to the salons to hear Chopin improvise. Not to mention Bach – great improvisor. A total musician.

In improvisation, you take up your instrument, like a tool. It is a tool, but it's also a mirror of what you are in the present moment, sadness, pain, pleasure, jubilation, they're all so real in that moment of improvisation, that great love. And then you work on it. It's a question of knowing how to structure the music with your playing partners, and of trusting the musicians you play with. Most of my encounters in free improvisation are duos, trios or quartets – I very rarely play with more than three other musicians in a free context – and the men and women I play with become themselves the score. When I play with Carlos [Zingaro] I play differently from how I play with a trombone or with a singer. A language is created in the ensemble. No, going back to Radu, I can never tire of improvised music. It's so vast – the individual playing with you is an enormous reservoir of poetic experience. In improvisation you can do so much! You can set off tomorrow and sit on the top of a mountain with an African you've never met before, or go into the Metro and play with an accordionist and make great music. You can never really know who that person is. Do you know who you are? I don't know who I am. Maybe before I die I'll have some idea.

GEORGE LEWIS

'HOMAGE TO CHARLES PARKER'

FROM HOMAGE TO CHARLES PARKER (BLACK SANTU 1998)

[Listens for a while] I have no idea. It's wonderful. So melodic, so romantic. It's American, black. It can't be Anthony Braxton [on six].

Not too off, it's Douglas Ewart.

[Piano solo begins] It's not Muhal Richard Abrams?

You're very close. There's an AACM connection.

[Several minutes later, the trombone comes in] Oh, it's George! What record is this? Who's on piano?

It's 'Homage to Charles Parker' from 1978. Anthony Davis on piano, Richard Teitelbaum on keyboards. I wouldn't have guessed Anthony. George is what we were just talking about, a musician involved in research, in technology, with a great knowledge of European music, a great curiosity. Like Braxton. There aren't many. What's Richard doing on this?

Playing synthesizers behind. You have a concert coming up with George soon, I think, at the Cité de la Musique in Paris.

As a duo, yes. George is a great friend, but we haven't played together for a long time. He's been so busy with his writing and teaching in California. He wants to play in the second part of the concert, which is an octet, a homage to Satie. I've always appreciated Satie, because he always went against the grain and did what he wanted. He didn't have any problems with writing cabaret songs, he made fun of society, he was a provocateur. I like that. I feel a kind of affinity with that – I'm a kind of outlaw too. My piece for the octet is a homage, but I don't use any of his music.

BRUNO MEILLIER & TOSHIMARU NAKAMURA

'POUSSE POUSSE GO'

FROM SHONHO (SHAI 2001)

The material is very interesting. Completely electronic. [Listens] But it sounds almost like bells or bowed cymbals: it's not American. It's certainly recent – if you'd chosen something by Pierre Schaeffer maybe I'd have got it. That relentless rhythm... I'm sure I don't know what it is. Keith [Rowe].

One of the musicians is French, the other Japanese. It's not Otomo [Yoshida].

He plays with Otomo, and also with Keith Rowe. It's Toshimaru Nakamura and Bruno Meillier.

I thought Bruno played sax. What is he playing here? We should see him more often in Paris.

He's on synthesizer, with a Sherman effects box. But he still plays sax. What do you think of electronics in improvisation?

A few years ago I had a great big rack of pedals, and I ended up selling them. Maybe I'm a purist, but when you get into the instrument, when you go beyond normal bowing, you sometimes find sounds which are almost like sinewaves, like electronics. I'm amazed at what I can get out of the good old instrument, and for me that's enough. Like the Malfatti we heard earlier...

Do you think performers using laptops can react quickly enough in improvising situations?

I've worked with Richard [Teitelbaum] and Joel Ryan, and I can say that when you work with a real expert it's wonderful. Like any instrument, there's a lot of study involved, a lot of practice and work. Keith has been doing it for 30 years. I don't want to seem mean-spirited, but there are a lot of twiddlers out there. There's a lot of crap. But it's the same with pianists: there are good pianists, there are average pianists and there are pianists de merde.

ARTHUR DOYLE ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC ENSEMBLE

'GOV'RY' & 'MONEY'

FROM THE AFRICAN LOVE CALL (ECSTASY 2001)

[Chuckles on hearing Doyle's singing] It's not him, but it reminds me of Cecil [Taylor], reciting his poetry as he arrives on stage, with his castanets. [The full group comes in on 'Money'] It's not chaos, wild! Well, I can tell you it's certainly not European, that's for sure. [Doyle's] tenor sax enters! It could be a really old Art Ensemble of Chicago disc...

But it's not. It's just come out.

My God, is there a violin wailing in there? It's not Butch Morris, because he's much more organised than that. It's not Fred Frith, though you never know what to expect with Fred. Where was it recorded, Chicago? New York? I give up.

It's Arthur Doyle, an American who now lives and works in Paris. There's a tendency these days, especially amongst promoters, to consider free jazz and free improvisation as two totally different worlds. Do you?

I don't make any difference between them. Free jazz is an appellation. There's still the word 'jazz'... I think the idea of rhythm is important in free jazz, the bass and drums, that fluidity. The horn players may play free, but there remains that polytempo behind, that rhythmic propulsion. Apart from that, I don't see much difference. I remember when I was still at the Conservatoire, I went to see Alan Silva and Bill Dixon. I used to go to the American Center. Frank Lowe, Frank Wright, they were all here. It was dangerous music, and it marked me for life. Nowadays jazz is so commercial, so institutionalised, with all these young guys with all their CDs who know all the [chord] charts, all the riffs by heart, and... so what? Here in France there are 325 bassists fresh out of school every year, 124 trumpeters, 412 jazz pianists, and what are they all going to do? It's comforting to me to know that music can still resist. I'm happy in the knowledge that Charlotte's still here, that Braxton's still here, that we're still here. ☐ Jollié Léandré & Kazue Satoh's Organic – Mineral is out now on In Situ, Out of Sound, with Lauren Newton and Urs Lemmergruber, is out this month on Leo. The Chicken Check-In Complex, with Carlos Zingaro and Sebi Tremontana, is out in March on Leo.



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RAINFOREST CRUNCH

IN NOVEMBER 2001, EXPERIMENTAL GUITARIST/AMM FOUNDER KEITH ROWE AND A GROUP OF FELLOW IMPROVISORS TOOK PART IN THE FESTIVAL DE L'EAU IN THE REMOTE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, BRAVING MONSOONS, LEECHES AND BRIBE-HUNGRY SOLDIERS TO COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL PYGMY MUSICIANS. IN THIS EXCLUSIVE DIARY, HE RECORDS AN UNPRECEDENTED MEETING OF WORLDS

PHOTOS: KAMEL MAAD

The *Festival de l'Eau* took place over eight days in the Central African Republic, and aimed to bring about a unique set of collaborations between improvisors, World Musicians and dancers from outside the CAR, and the pygmy musicians and orchestras from its remote towns and villages. The CAR is one of the most remote and inaccessible regions of Africa. Lying above the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it's completely landlocked, with a population of 3.5 million scattered throughout its extensive plains and rainforests. Largely unmonitored, the confrontations took place in the manner of Derek Bailey's legendary Company Weeks, with musicians simply being thrown together on stage. In many cases the pygmy musicians had never heard each other's groups, never mind the music coming in from Europe.

As well as Keith Rowe, the French musicians taking part in the festival were Aïrème Nootviger (electroacoustics), Dominique Chevaucher (voice/theatre), Camel Zeïn (guitar) and Jean-Pierre Baudouin (sound); the Central African group were Orchestre Trompes De Banda (dance, tree root trumpets, bells) and M'Bata Pygmies (dance, chant and *far* musical). Others taking part included Aly Kéita (balafon, Mali), Yacoubé Moumouni (tuba, Niger), Kamel Maad (tims, Algeria-France) and Fred Yapoender (dance, CAR). White follows is Keith Rowe's diary of the trip.

23 NOVEMBER 2001

This is the second attempt to hold the Festival de

l'Eau. The first, scheduled for the previous January, was abandoned because of street violence following demonstrations by schoolteachers and civil servants who had not been paid for two years. Ten months later they have still not been paid and there is sporadic shooting on the streets. Last week there was a stand-off between President Ange-Félix Patassé's troops and soldiers loyal to the chief of staff, who had just been sacked. All is calm for now, but could quickly deteriorate without warning.

Given the recent shootings, I check the British Government's Foreign Office travel advice Website. "We advise against all travel to the CAR," it says, accompanied by a long list of warnings about curfews, not to wear valuables, not to travel at night (and only in daylight, with armed escorts); not to mention illnesses such as sleeping sickness, malaria...

The festival has been organised by the partnership of Camel Zeïn and Dominique Chevaucher. Camel descends from generations of Algerian musicians; while studying in Paris, he formed a link between the traditional music he had experienced in Africa and "free improvisation". To his ears, both forms shared an openness not found in other musics. He imagined a meeting based on this openness, allowing vastly different musical styles to work together. It would not be a question of fusing different elements – after all, there is no musical "problem" to be solved. Rather than impose a search for a common dialogue, he instigated the Festival because he wanted to see what would happen when musicians simply played together in a spirit of shared openness.



Opposite page: Keith Rose (in canoe, facing camera) takes a trip into the Central African Republic interior. Above: Pygmies and invited musicians beside the compound in CAR's capital, Bangui.

24 NOVEMBER: GETTING THERE

The flight from Paris to the Central African capital Bangui is pretty uneventful. I select French country cuisine from the Pontou Charentes region (fish and leeks, turkey with Gamay sauce, camembert, Cabernet VDP). I plug in my 'écouteur Air-Land' and click to *Chanel 4* (Air France's World Music channel) and by an extraordinary coincidence I immediately hear the music of Youcoubia Moumouni – who is sitting in the next seat. He starts running around the plane getting people to 'check out Channel 4 – c'est moi! C'est moi!' Hmm, maybe he really is an African superstar.

Eight hours later we arrive at Bangui Mpoko airport. It's 6:30 in the morning. All the equipment is loaded onto an open-backed 4x4. Before we have travelled 25 metres, gunshots echo from the departure lounge. Our driver accelerates, swerving violently to avoid people running all over the place. The drive from the airport along the Avenue des Martyrs triggers all the filmic images I've experienced, but now with the air full of aromas and hypervivid colour.

25 NOVEMBER: OUR COMPOUND

We arrive in the capital Bangui and are taken to our residence at La Colline, an area on the east side overlooking the city. Pygmies are relaxing in the shade, under the effect of the palm wine. I'm told later by our hosts from the Alliance Française.

Cooks have barbecued a whole goat, and discussion

around the meal does not revolve around Western concerns such as house prices, but gory descriptions of 'coups d'états I've seen', with enactments and illustrations of damage done to the victims – as well as the all-important mosquito stories. Sleep – still really hot, humid, strange: it gets dark at 5:30. The pygmies and trompe (literally 'trumpet') groups sleep in the open on grass mats. I lie in my bed, waiting for the mosquitoes and flies to arrive. It gets light early – cold showers at 6:30 are not my preference. This is a coffee producing country but all we get for breakfast is Nescafé. For me, this symbolises the way Africa gets screwed by Europe.

26-28 NOVEMBER: TROMPES AND PYGMIES

Over the next few days we are scheduled to play with two groups of pygmies from two separate villages. Communications in the CAR are extremely basic – outside of the major centres there is no electricity, phones or post, and if you need to travel between towns, you have to walk. Consequently the two CAR groups here have never even encountered each other's music, let alone that of us Westerners. The pygmies use a mixture of vocal sounds, sustained, rising and falling, employing huge internal leaps reminiscent of yodelling, chest notes alternating with head notes. Apparently many of the 'songs' relate to hunting experiences. The trompe group employ a highly complex polyphonic kaleidoscope of sound, blowing

through hollowed-out tree roots and antelope horns. They are directed by a leader using hand-held bells, playing and dancing in a snaking line, their counterpoint changing continually as they move.

In mid-morning, we assemble for our first music making session. We introduce ourselves to the assembled company, first in standard French, then Central African French, then in the local Sango: our names, instruments and what we do. I cannot tell what it means for the pygmies and the trompe group to see this strange guy (ie: me) put a little into the guitar strings and talk about the transformation of a utilitarian object into the art object through placement, and the importance of ambiguity. The African musicians talk about ritual, society and place,

We begin to play. The sheer volume and expressive power of the trompe group is incredible, blowing a trombone-like, strongly contrapuntal sound through hollowed-out tree roots.

We from the 'European Improv' scene are familiar with the unfamiliar, and with the politics of listening. Since these two groups from the CAR have never seen or heard each other's music and dance either, it's a revelation for them too. I'm not sure how they perceive us, or what their experience of the unfamiliar is. How do we deal with this possible uneasiness without employing paternalism and cultural hegemony? I don't think I've encountered such extremes – not just different musical styles, but wealth, lifestyle, where we live, what we eat, how we dress, experiences, thoughts, stories. For three days we eat, drink and play all together and in various combinations.



"THE STAGE LIGHTS SNAP ON. IMMEDIATELY A BLIZZARD OF MOSQUITOES DESCENDS, RESEMBLING WWII DIVE BOMBERS – THOUSANDS OF THEM, HUGE, DAZED, STUNNED, CRAWLING ALL OVER MY GUITAR, ELECTRONICS, HANDS, EYES"

During this period one can hear the way Yacouba's flute acquires a distinctly electronic edge as he reaches out to accommodate the belligerent electronics from myself and Jérôme Noetinger. Aly's balafon now sounds like continuous clatter, much more abstract, less obviously linked to the other African musics. Our own electronics have become closer to nature: the cicadas, frogs, wind, distant dogs, strangely ancient and modern, rather like prehistoric cave drawings that suddenly resemble a Matisse or Picasso.

The pygmies are constantly collecting and using found materials in their dances. In the compound, where we are working, the plant life and terrain are very different from their village surroundings. On one occasion the group are taken in to Bangui to buy 'new' clothes. They return with ex-70s and 80s French sportswear: orange and yellow tracksuits, hooded sweatshirts, etc. Almost immediately they incorporate the sweatshirt hoods, with the 'new' leaves, to fashion a headdress juxtaposing these unfamiliar materials.

During these three days, a sentence from an article by Bruce Bower in *Science News* sticks in my mind: "The pleasure of the new is a biological mechanism that can loosen the grip of previously acquired perspectives on the world and lay the neural groundwork for securing crucial new knowledge." This, in fact, reflects our whole enterprise here: the juxtaposition of musical parts, previously unimagined, perceived at that moment without prejudice.

29 NOVEMBER: THE INTERIOR

Today there is no playing. Instead, we plan to visit the village where the pygmy musicians live, while they go

into town and visit Bangui. We are told we will need to walk for an hour or so and cross a stream. I imagine this means wading, perhaps up to my knees. I guess in my head I have an image of the countryside in Devon or Cornwall.

We make our way out of Bangui, and at the city limit we encounter our first roadblock. It seems pretty typical: soldiers sitting around, one slowly strolling to our vehicle to check the passports and the all important transit documents which have to be obtained for every journey outside Bangui.

Hundreds of people are walking on each side of the road. Occasionally we pass an ancient Peugeot loaded beyond belief. With its doors removed, it allows perhaps ten people to hold on, along with sacks of rice, bananas, boxes of food, firewood. Our driver has acquired the French technique of driving: hand on horn, we pass through villages at 100-120 kmh. People and goats evaporate before us, except the ducks, who have not yet acquired a Pavlovian response to car horns (get out the orange sauce...).

We pass the town of Bimbo (no cheap comments from me), 150 kilometres later the road narrows and we arrive at the River Lobaye. It gets difficult from now on. We precariously balance our way onto a long dugout canoe and struggle against the flow. When we reach the other side we begin to walk into the forest. The number of skills I haven't developed are about to become evident: balancing while walking along slippery tree trunk bridges above cane, slimy green-brown water; wading barefoot through leech-infested water; how not to be distracted by flies.

After two hours of wading, walking, slipping, balancing and slipping again, I look as if I've been in the rainforest for a year. We reach the village of

Balaïd, about five kilometres from the border with former Belgian Congo – red-earth igloo type structures of palm stalks and giant leaves. We meet and shake hands with the standard greeting "Bonjour", always met with the reply "Merci". Walking through the forest, we pass pygmies returning from hunting, one with a wild boar strapped on his back and carrying a rifle of First World War vintage that's taller than him; others with all types of wildlife suspended from canelike structures.

We've taken so long to arrive at the village that we must return almost immediately, but not before reflecting on what it must be like to be a musician here, making a music so integrated with everyday life. Of course, I cannot imagine – I guess I would need to stay here for some considerable time before even scratching the surface. It will be dark in an hour, so we depart and take a longer but easier route back. Roughly an hour into the walk, darkness falls, illuminated only by a tropical storm close by. The whole forest is lit up intermittently, overwater tree-trunk balancing is replaced by underwater tree-balancing (the fourth undeveloped skill). Here we are, barefoot in the dark, feeling our way along submerged tree trunks. Now the storm has reached us; I constantly fall off, landing up to my waist in fast flowing streams. I grew up in Plymouth and thought I knew a thing or two about rain, but this deluge is enormous, like a film set.

We reach the river, but our guide and boatman says it's too rough to cross. The prospect of camping out does not appeal. After much discussion we get back in the boat. It's surreal, moving fast downstream in the dark, lightning illuminating the orange sky with blue flashes. I put my hand in the water: it's hot!

Reaching the other side we are soaked, and begin



Opposite page left to right: Arlène Noetinger with local residents; troupe orchestra from the Bembe tribe; Roulard Yacouba Moumou. Above: Music conference in the compound

driving back against the clock in order to beat the curfew. The only indication of villages is the smell of wood fires. On the outskirts of Bangui, at the very last roadblock, the army commander informs us that although the curfew is at 8pm, the barrier closes at six. In our party is Hubert Bongosso of the music group Zokela, 'big star' in the Central African Republic. We are rescued by his fame – the commander recognises him and lifts the barrier. We drive with minutes to spare.

The evening's entertainment is provided by film maker Kamel Madi, who has discovered a giant leech attached to his leg. Once detached, the pygmies delight in burning, squashing and grinding this engorged object. Sleep, though not before examining every inch of my body for foreign objects.

1 DECEMBER: PERFORMANCE

Independence Day in the Central African Republic. The performance space is a large open air stage with seating ranked in front. We spend a hot, humid afternoon preparing. The performance is due to start at 6pm and finish at eight, giving people time to return home before the curfew at nine – though the evening before, the president made an hour-long declaration. I watch people grouped around a radio, and judging from their hostile body language, the president has a problem with pygmies. He announces that from today the curfew will start at midnight – unfortunately too late for us to push back the time of our performance.

The public fill the seating quickly: the French Ambassador and his wife sit with other high flyers in the front row. After a short introduction, the stage lights snap on. Immediately a blizzard of mosquitoes

descends, resembling WWII dive bombers – thousands of them, huge, dazed and stunned, crawling all over my guitar, electronics, hands, eyes.

We appear as the group Nomad – the ones who have travelled to Central Africa. The plan is for the amplified group of instruments to start, and we generate a gentle, slow drifting sound that permeates the night air – it's as if we have amplified the heat, humidity, the buzzing of the insects. Again it feels like 'nature's nature' with an Industrial edge. After a while, we are joined by Moumou and Kenta. Their flute and balafon, layered over the electronics, transform the electrostatic into a sonic map of Africa. Spread over the large stage, some 10-15 metres apart, they almost reflect the vastness of this continent. The organic hum slowly dissolves into the background cicada buzz – leaving the flute on its own.

Then, in the far distance we hear the Orchestre Oe Trompe from behind the audience, dancing and blowing as they slowly move towards the stage. You can feel the excitement radiating from the crowd – many experiencing these musicians for the first time. As the Orchestra reach the stage the power of their sound is incredible. The sheer force of movement is overpowering. The audience breaks into spontaneous clapping, cheering, shouting. 20 minutes later the Orchestra stop abruptly, and again the cicadas fill the vacuum. Slowly Fred Yapendet moves centre stage. He is the only contemporary dancer in the CAR. In complete silence, he becomes a pivotal point between tradition and modernity. His movements are projected live by Kamel Madi using a hand-held video camera capable of incredible close-ups. At one point the huge screen is filled with the grain of the dancer's black skin. He dances off stage to collect more pygmies,

who are waiting off to our right. Soon we hear the pygmy chant. Yapendet stays on stage for a while, making movements which become modern translations of the pygmy dance. It's as if he is bringing tradition to meet the modern world of video image and electronics.

Clad in enormous grass skirts, the pygmies' dance is an energetic hip-swinging and rib-rotating movement, a complete blur and very different from the dance of the troupe group. To the rear, the giant screen is filled with digitally collected images of our journey to their village, and gradually our electronic backwash swirls around them. One by one the balafon, flute, tree roots, guitar, voice join in, the focus constantly shifting from Bamban to M'bata, then through Mali, France, Algeria, England, Niger to Bangui.

It's hard to ascertain what it all means. The parts have remained separate – there has been no fusion, crossover, no 'Deep Forest' vanish, no attempt to homogenise the separate entities beyond the bare fact of co-existence. In a sense, it's been comparatively simple to present this collection of disparate parts in the African forest. There is a plan to tour this project in 2003 in Europe. But how can we present such a concept in a European culture of performance, exhibitions, concerts and spectacles; a culture of fixed start and finish times? And how do we achieve meaningful contextualisation within the realm of Western power relations, cultural and intellectual property, voyeurism, musical aesthetics, musical differences and cultural responsibility?

It has been an immense pleasure and an honour to take part in the Festival de l'Eau, but it will take some considerable time to absorb the experience and I'm left with more questions than answers. □



WITH
HIS
PIONEERING
CYBERSONIC
APPARATUS,
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GORDON
MUMMA
PLACED
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WITH
HIS
COLLABORATORS
JOHN
CAGE,
DAVID
TUADOR
AND
MERCE
CUNNINGHAM

BOMB CULTURE

WORDS:
RICHARD
HENDERSON
MAIN
PHOTO:
MARIE
ARAGO



"The historians are out chasing me because I'm getting old, right?" cracks Gordon Mumma. Scanning the view from his home atop a ridge east of Berkeley, California, Gordon Mumma cackles with delight at the prospect of retrospectively examining his formidable position in 20th century music. During the past five decades he has amassed an impossibly varied body of work, composing in acoustic and electronic idioms with equal facility, while consistently dismantling the barriers between the two. He also cuts an elegant figure cradling his signature French horn as a performer of his own compositions or those of his contemporaries.

Though a much younger Gordon Mumma was pictured dead centre of the cover of Michael Nyman's groundbreaking 1974 book *Experimental Music: Cage And Beyond*, he has yet to achieve the wider acclaim of his more illustrious collaborators like fellow composers John Cage and David Tudor, or choreographer Merce Cunningham. But you'd be hard pressed to imagine a more appropriate single person to represent the range of approaches catalogued in Nyman's study than Mumma.

Expanding the definition of 'composer', Mumma deemed the designing and building of electronic circuitry to be as fundamental to his art as musical notation. For him and his composer cohorts in the shoestring-budget 60s collectives Sonic Arts Union and ONCE Group, generating musical sound was placed on equal footing with the electronic processing of that sound, several aspects of which Mumma made possible with such inventions as his Cybersonic console, worn around his waist, the better to mutate his aphorn's timbre. Mumma brought the avant garde musician out of the orchestra pit and onto the stage as an integral component of performance art in the postwar era.

The long awaited release this month of a CD retrospective entitled *Live Electronic Music*, on John Zorn's Tzadik label, contains examples of Mumma's integration of live performance and sounds processed through his self-designed devices, including *Mesa*, a piece for bandoneon and Cybersonic console performed by David Tudor; a reworked and remastered version of *Homopage*, in which Mumma's live horn playing is transmuted and distorted through his strap-on Cybersonic gear; and the more recent *Than Particle*, featuring percussionist William Winant. Together with 2000's CD overview, *Studio Retrospect (Lovely Music)*, which compiled his solo electronic work from the end of the 50s through 1984, it permits an overdue reappraisal of Mumma's career as composer, performer and inventor.

Mumma has compiled *Live Electronic Music* as a companion volume to *Studio Retrospect*. Between those two discs, all of the compositions from his two previous Lovely Music LPs, save for two pieces, are now available in digital form. "For me a few years is just a few minutes," he says. "I'm behind on getting these recordings out. For all the mentions of these pieces in history books and wherever else, most folks who are curious about them end up wondering where the hell they are," he laments, brightening as he adds, "What's coming out on the CDs are complete versions of pieces that had only been represented by abridged versions on vinyl. My new Tzadik CD has the complete *Homopage*, over 18 minutes; the version that was on the *Mainstream* LP had been trimmed to 12 minutes. We had to lose the entire beginning of that one for the earlier album."

Even as *Live Electronic Music* finally sees the light of day, Mumma plans two releases for the immediate future, one comprising new recordings and the other continuing the retrospective theme of his existing

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GORDON MUMMA PERFORMS AMBIYEX (1978) WITH HORN AND BODYMOUNTED CYBERSONIC ACCELEROMETER

discs. The latter, already in the works, includes complete versions of both the 1973 work, *Cybersonic Cantilevers*, and the provocatively titled *Megaton For William Burroughs*. The latter composition, a live electronic piece "for ten electronics, acoustic and communication channels", dates from 1963, the apex of Cold War paranoia. The original performances in 1964 featured long steel wires in which objects whizzed overhead, while the performing ensemble's stage positions were arranged according to the seating plan of a world war two bomber plane, coordinating their actions by headphones links. Mumma recalls, "People were building bomb shelters, crap like that. Panic, right? The title was partly an honorarium to something Burroughs represented, both as an author and as an icon of rebellion, which was beyond his making. Also, because the piece involves airplanes, a Second World War air raid, it was essentially a war statement. I made use of cuttakes from propaganda films celebrating the bombing of the enemy, that gives you an idea of [Megaton's] character. The word 'megaton' was almost sufficient for the title, but when I reread his work now, I realize that this is still potent stuff. I'm glad that I honoured him with that music."

Gordon Mumma first showed his own technologically subversive tendencies as a teenager in the Detroit suburbs, when he took apart his father's turntable and reconstructed it to play records either forwards or backwards. "I kept rebuilding my bicycle when I was a kid, too," he recalls. Born in 1935 in Massachusetts, his family moved to Ann Arbor in 1953 where he enrolled at the University of Michigan. Classically trained on French horn, Mumma began contributing music to campus theatrical productions, and customised tape recorders in order to achieve the specific effects demanded by his scores. For his generation, designing new tools was an essential part of the compositional process. "There were no other options," he asserts. "That's sometimes difficult for other people to comprehend. In the 1950s, when I first became involved with electronic music, it had to do with tape recorders, which had just come into existence. The practicality of tape recorders was so appealing. We could do rehearsals without musicians being present, with the advantage that you didn't have to get the band together to try out a new idea. I began to acquire oscillators that had previously been available only to radio technicians, and built circuitry involving them.

"My teenage sons have no idea what a soldering iron is," he states. "They're involved with coding. It's just a different medium. They invent things on their own and that's what we did. I was a classically trained musician, a French horn player and pianist. Moving to another medium and working with electronics led to having a lot of materials that I could work with by the end of the 50s. I made some juvenile-sounding pieces, though some of these were so elaborate by the time they were processed - I had developed different kinds of modulation devices. Most of my teachers at the University of Michigan didn't know what the hell I was talking about, but I did connect with electrical engineering students on campus. The latter were amused by my efforts. They'd say, 'You're doing all this stuff that distorts sound and we're working to make sound reproduction as realistic as possible.' They were peers, guys my age who were drinking buddies, and they helped me a great deal. There was cross-nourishing of ideas, which was the only way we could work because there was no commerce for what we were doing yet."

Mumma lived in Ann Arbor through 1966, a watershed period in his life, when he co-founded the Cooperative Studio for Electronic Music and the Sonic Arts Union with composer Robert Ashley, as well as the now

historic ONCE Festivals of Contemporary Music. Launched in early 1961, Mumma describes the ONCE Festival (and attendant ONCE group) as "the first area coalition of diverse people who were outside of the academic institution, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in this case". He continues, "Most of the people I worked with were renegades, they didn't get along so well in the institutions. This coalition blossomed very fast because we were early in doing this. The Sonic Arts Union, the four of us - Robert Ashley, Alvin Lucier, David Behrman and myself - connected through the ONCE Festival. We brought Behrman and Lucier from the East Coast to Ann Arbor. We brought in lots of people. I think that the first performances of Luciano Berio and Cathy Berberian were at the ONCE Festival. John Cage had never performed in the U of Michigan music department, though the arts and architecture people had invited him previously."

"We did two ONCE Festivals in 1966, one in spring, one in the fall. The momentum was underway earlier, in the 1950s, when Robert Ashley and I were working with a wonderful visual artist, Milton Cohen, who made a large theatre production with live electronic music in his loft. This included George Magnapelli, a film maker whose work was scored by Robert Ashley. Already in the late 50s we were creating mixed media work. These were the days of black and white 16mm film, a medium that Magnapelli excelled in. The ONCE Festival grew out of that spirit, with the Sonic Arts Union springing up in turn from that."

Mumma describes the Sonic Arts Union as "four very different people working in four very different ways, and it was those differences that we admired. Because our individual musical directions were so distinct, we made a wonderfully balanced concert programme. We largely did our own work, with each lending performance support to the other's work. But these were not collaborative works - an important distinction to make, which set us apart from contemporaries like AMM in England or Musica Elettronica Viva in Rome with [Frederic] Rzewski and the others. I'm always happy to cite our coalition, as there are still people who are intimidated about belonging to institutions in order to get anything done."

During this period, Mumma unveiled his new creation: the Cybersonic console. Its prototype was a stationary sound-processing unit, but later he redesigned it as a signal processor that could actually be worn on a musician's body. "The Cybersonic console wasn't just a single thing, there were different kinds of them," Mumma explains. "They consisted of circuits that made possible the processing of acoustical sounds - the French horn in *Hommage* (1967), or the bandoneon in the piece *Mesa* (1966), which David Tudor plays. Whatever the sound sources, they were processed directly, *av*, by these Cybersonic circuits. A console was created for a particular piece. I just kept developing different things for them to do. I didn't call that a Cybersonic device at first. The name came later. The term is obviously related to cybernetics, the Greek root of which refers to the person who steers the ship. Nowadays I think they sell toothbrushes with that name. I never copyrighted it, but it appears in music encyclopedias and various reference sources."

What was his console for - ring modulation? Distortion? Pitchshifting? "All of that," Mumma laughs. "particularly ring modulation and envelope following. The principle of the Cybersonic console, to my mind, was that the processing was derived from aspects of the original signals themselves, with the dynamics of my performance on French horn changing the nature of signal processing, sometimes directly, sometimes delayed. For *Horn* (1965), I was sitting with the horn. There were two singers with me: Robert Ashley and

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SONIC ARTS UNION (WITH ALVIN LUCIER & DAVID TUDOR) RECORDING SESSION FOR SWEDISH RADIO, 1971; MUMMA & LEROY JENKINS PERFORM COMMUNICATION IN A NOISY ENVIRONMENT, NYC 1970; IN MARCHING BAND UNIFORM, FERNDALE 1969; MUMMA'S ANN ARBOR STUDIO, 1962; REHEARSING WITH PAULINE OLIVEROS, 1988

George Cacioppo, both composers involved with the ONCE Festival. The two vocal inputs [into the Cybersonic console] and the horn input reprocessed each other so rapidly that it came out as one of the grittiest, ugliest sounds imaginable. The box sat on the table for that piece, as we were sitting like a small chamber music group. It was with Horrope that I began wearing these things. Mesa was done with David Tudor, who'd asked for a piece involving his bandoneon, then Merce Cunningham asked me if I'd do it for his dance company. So I knew there would be dancers onstage and the performers would be in the orchestra pit. Two consoles were on the table then, but with Horrope it became a piece of theatre, something that I wore. I was playing the horn in the early traditions of standing and moving about in the space. As I'd move about, the acoustic responses of playing a windhorn [the pre-video antecedent to the French horn] would change and all of that was listened to by the console. At a certain point, the console would respond."

He pauses, noting, "I had an umbilical cord in that I was wired up to loudspeakers offstage and I had to move about in a skilled manner, being careful not to step on the wires. We couldn't afford to go wireless in 1966. Besides, the space race between America and the USSR was very much in the air at that time. Seeing images of astronauts climbing out of space capsules tethered by life support cables kind of gave my umbilical cord symbolic weight. I toured with Horrope for four or five years, and it acquired an added theatrical sensation because of that visual addition, the heroic image – or embarrassing in that era, as I understand the Soviets did it first – of the umbilical cord. The mobility of it was just wonderful and I had been able to condense the equipment to the point where I could wear the Cybersonic console on my belt. Later on, the movements of Merce Cunningham's dancers were measured by accelerometers and other gear to trigger sounds, so I was able to acquire radio transmitters in place of the cabling."

By 1966, with five or six of the ONCE Festivals notched up, those involved in their development started attracting attention from other institutions. Gordon Mumma took up an offer to work with Merce Cunningham's dance company. Robert Ashley went to Mills College in Oakland, California. "Essentially the momentum of the early 60s activity in the Ann Arbor milieu was such that reputations were established and people were invited to go elsewhere as groups or individuals," Mumma reflects. "It was as much a hothouse environment for New Music as the San Francisco Tape Music Center, whose history neatly parallels that of the ONCE Festival."

His tenure as composer-in-residence, alongside David Tudor and John Cage, with Merce Cunningham lasted from the summer of 1966 through the end of 1972. "That's not the only thing I did during that time," he allows, "but they had the priority for my artistic focus during that period. Others, like Pauline Oliveros or David Behrman, would be invited to participate at intervals.

"Merce commissioned a work of mine that required three of the dancers to wear accelerometers [belts which measured vertical and diagonal movements]. The side effects were fascinating. We utilised standard US radio broadcast frequencies to transmit the data from the accelerometers to [the electronic sound gear]. On some of our European tours, especially in Poland, the receivers began picking up police commands – these were the same radio frequencies received by the secret police. The audience would hear this in between the sounds generated by the dancers' movements. This wasn't a long piece, but we were advised not to do it again. Such incidents were all part of using developing

technology, in this case one that was developing sociologically as well as politically at the time."

In the winter of 1968, the Merce Cunningham Dance Company was in residence in Buffalo, NY, shuttling back and forth between the State University of New York and Buffalo State College. Evoking a period of fervent creativity, Mumma notes that David Tudor's electronic composition *Rainforest* was first performed during that period. Shortly thereafter, Pauline Oliveros composed for the Cunningham troupe. But a high watermark of the Buffalo residency for Mumma and his Cunningham colleagues was their participation in the historically significant Reunion concert at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in nearby Toronto, Canada in 1968. "Toronto got bubbling with a lot of New Music activity in the 1960s," Mumma recalls. "It was a little more stable, less innovative area, but there were unique individuals there including Ido Kuzematz, who got cooking on the Reunion project."

Based around a chess game between John Cage and artist Marcel Duchamp, the concert involved musical contributions from Behrman, Tudor and Mumma. For Reunion, Lowell Cross – who collaborated with Tudor on various multimedia events – developed a chess board with a photoelectric routing mechanism integrated within the playing surface. A player would move a chess piece, altering the relationship between the input of the onstage musicians, Mumma included, and the output of the sound system.

Duchamp, that most enigmatic icon of 20th century conceptual art, and no mean chess player himself, was accompanied in Toronto by his wife Teeny. "She played chess as well," says Mumma. "Though she wasn't the killer that Marcel was. However, she could give John Cage a run for his money. John worked very hard at chess; he wanted to equal Marcel's abilities in that realm." The Duchamps flew in from New York for the performance, avoiding the dramatic border crossing experienced by Cage, Mumma and the US contingent, when that era's unrest and violent protest guaranteed the excessive scrutiny by Canadian customs of suspicious-looking musicians and their elaborate electronic gear. Ultimately, they were admitted to the country only after posting a hefty bond to cover their electronic equipment. Having just acquired his first credit card, John Cage exhausted his first credit line as the group's guarantor. Mumma remembers, "A remarkable thing in working around someone like John Cage was that when resources were available, he used all of them. He was very generous about that. If it was possible, he'd bring more people into a project."

The concert itself was as eventful as the border crossing and just as unpredictable. Mumma recalls, "A lot of activities were completely beyond anybody's control, largely owing to the chessboard, which programmed a contour of activity for the whole performance. We were doing our own electronic modification, providing our own sound sources on the side of the stage. Easily three quarters of what we did was never heard, not even by the performers. I had headphones, so I could hear my own output. The chessboard ultimately determined what sounds were heard by the audience. You can't really define chess as a random activity – it's an intensely controlled activity. But the musical results in Reunion were unpredictable, if not exactly indeterminate. If John decided to move the queen in a certain direction, it might or might not have an effect on the music. It was a very interesting situation. The first game – with Marcel and John, Marcel walked right over him – was played to conclusion and a second game was undertaken between John and Teeny, which was not finished."

Reunion was staged a few months before Ouchamps followed the following summer. "Marcel wouldn't have

anything to do with money," Mumma reminisces. "He wasn't a professional chess player, but belonged to the international amateur world, an important distinction in that game. We were all being paid for Reunion, I was the de facto payroll manager. Marcel wouldn't accept his cheque, claiming 'I am an amateur'. Unaware of the critical distinction, I ventured that we were all amateurs [laughs]. Being paid for playing chess would have destroyed his standing in the chess community. He took the cheque, ultimately."

Typically for such events at the time, Reunion was impossible to categorise. Mumma sighs, "I don't know how to label that performance. Was it collaborative? Philosophically, politically or economically, perhaps, but in terms of all my diverse experience in performance – theatre, music, whatever – there was nothing like it. We had absolutely no control over what came out of the loudspeakers. What you heard was like the weather – a completely quixotic entity."

In the 80s, Mumma appeared to be moving from electronic composition back to writing for acoustic players. His peer Morton Subotnick seemed to be following a similar trajectory. "It might look that way," counters Mumma, "but you have to understand that I came out of the concert tradition. My upbringing was the classical German traditions – some French, some Italian – that existed in the United States. That's my whole background. The electronic music activities began in the mid-80s. I never separated electronic composing from concert activity, the two overlapped. Their identities became wildly divergent at times, but I never meant to eschew one for the other."

However, Mumma does concede that the ever increasing time required to master new software is sufficient motivation to think acoustic. "I learned music notation in second and third grade in school during the 40s," he avers. "That technology hasn't changed. I still compose waltzes for the piano. I still do that. The classical traditions take a lot longer to learn and they tend to be more stable. You can fool around with interpretation, but they're pretty much museum items. I don't use the term pejoratively. We redo them. I compose a lot of solo piano music. That's not so much about the electronic stuff, with which I was more of an innovator, certainly, than with instrumental music. The thing about writing short piano pieces is that it's just pencil and paper work, rolling blackouts don't affect it. We have a super dependency on gadgets that are continually changing. But in the electronic music world, there are the people who use it strictly as an imitative instrument. I have no interest in that side of it. I'll always prefer clarinets to clarinet patches on a synthesizer. On the other side is where all the best breaks loose. You try anything. Now people interested in software design seem to inhabit this realm. That's still very much an innovative world."

"It's not that I'm getting too old," Mumma concludes. "The technological means of doing our work are rapidly changing. I try to move a bit slower so I don't waste my time relearning something that I can do perfectly well with an earlier way of doing things. So I do a lot of piano music. Publishers are finally getting interested in this – that helps – and performers too, but that's not the most innovative part of my musical work. It's not a value judgment, merely a comment on the different nature of that work. Extending the physical possibilities of any instrument invokes a range of issues that don't seem problematic for those people using computers to compose and perform music. There's only so far you can go with performance on the piano before you destroy the instrument." □ *Live Electronic Music is our now on 7zadik. Official Gordon Mumma Website: www.brainwashed.com/mumma*

BLOOD OF

RICHARD HELL'S BLANK GENERATION WAS A CLARION CALL TO 1977 PUNKS LOOKING FOR AN ANTHEM. BUT FOR THE PAST 25 YEARS THE NEW YORKER HAS DEVELOPED A CAREER AS AN UNDERGROUND WRITER ON THE EVE OF THE PUBLICATION OF HIS COLLECTED WRITINGS, AND WITH A VOIDOIDS CD RETROSPECTIVE DUE, HELL REVIEWS A CAREER THAT BROUGHT HIM INTO CONTACT WITH JOHNNY THUNDERS, TOM VERLAINE, ROBERT QUINE, WILLIAM BURROUGHS, TED BERRIGAN, AND THURSTON MOORE.

WORDS: ALAN LICHT
PHOTOS: JAKE WALTERS

A whole quarter of a century has elapsed since the release of *Blank Generation*, the record that put Richard Hell And The Voidoids on the musical map. From the ascending rush of its opening seconds, to the discordant guitar clusters that open "Lies Beware", to the mashed-up chords that constitute the solo in the title track, it's clear that it has a more advanced musical pedigree than The Ramones, The Sex Pistols, or any of the punk era's other leading lights. Further, it still hasn't been properly acknowledged as a forebear of Sonic Youth's embrace of atonality. However, it's The Voidoids' willingness to drop a Chuck Berry riff into the bridge of "New Pleasure", for instance, that differentiates it from Television's Marquee Moon or Patti Smith's Horses, the other two NYC-sophisticate offerings of the decade. Television scaled incredible heights of musical interplay without lapsing into "Progressive", but their excitement was not traditionally rock per se. Horses may have referenced "Gloria", "Land Of A Thousand Dances" and Huey "Piano" Smith but, rooted, Smith's earlier poetry readings with musical accompaniment, its overall tone is sombre. Though Hell let his poetry roots show, he was also focused on having a group that operated from a firm rock 'n' roll base. Indeed, you can detect an immediate attitudinal difference in their respective cover artwork — compare *Blank Generation's* Hell baring his chest with "You Make Me..." scrawled on it, with Horses' depiction of Smith, photographed by Robert Mapplethorpe in a clean white shirt, black tie and a jacket draped over her shoulder. This may be the key to *Blank Generation's* initial acclaim and longevity: if standard issue punk was too lowbrow for some, and Patti or Television too highbrow for others, Hell's remarkable album fitted right in the middle.

What distinguishes *Blank Generation* is how The Voidoids' rock capabilities weren't realised at the expense of Hell's ambitions for his lyrics. On the contrary, collected together with his poems, notebooks, photos and essays covering the last 30 years, in the newly published book *Hot And Cold*, his songs read as well as they sing. "I don't see a progression," remarks Hell, when asked about the development of his lyrics, "I see forays, expansions, raids... into different territories. It's not linear, it's trying a lot of different things and trying to figure out how to do various different things well. I like how various it is." His comment just as readily describes his entire literary output.

Richard Hell was born Richard Meyers in Lexington, Kentucky in late 1949. A restless teenager, at the tail end of 1966 he left school and, funded by a brief stint working in a pornographic bookstore, moved to New York to immerse himself in the poetic life of the city. By 1973 he had hooked up with Thomas Miller, his guitarplaying best friend from high school who had changed his name to Tom Verlaine. Along with Delaware drummer Billy Ficca, the pair formed a group called The Neon Boys. The following year, with the addition of second guitarist Richard Lloyd, the group mutated into Television, making their live debut at the Townhouse Theatre in front of a stack of TV screens all tuned to different channels. A Hell song called "The Void", whose title was derived from rowdy conversations in the local deli where the group would add 'old' to every name they called each other, gave early notice of his future intentions. And his contributions to a retrospectively released Neon Boys single on Shake in 1980 reveal that his strategy was already in place in 1973. The tough post-Stones, guitar based sound, combined with twisted lyrics like "Well I myself have got from on my ipsy/It's delicious, lady, won't you have a sip?", served as a blueprint for future Hell endeavours. The single is also the truest integration of his and Tom Verlaine's sensibilities — for

one, the latter's guitar playing never sounded so primitive as here.

Television went on to become kings of the first wave of New York punk — but without Hell. His only recorded appearance with the group is on the 1975 Little Johnny Jewel EP. The presence of two songwriters jockeying for sole position generated the friction that precipitated Hell's early departure. He left after Verlaine would only let Television record one of his songs, "Blank Generation", as part of a Brian Eno-produced demo for Island Records. He was briefly a member of The Heartbreakers, with ex-New York Dolls Johnny Thunders and Jerry Nolan.

Following his flirtation with The Heartbreakers, he formed The Voidoids with guitarists Robert Quine and Ivan Julian, and drummer Marc Bell, recruited from Wayne County's group Electric Chairs. In 1977, with The Voidoids, Hell cut the classic *Blank Generation*, which was released on Sire. The album was as classic, in fact, that it fulfilled all Hell's ambitions as a rock artist, causing him to rapidly lose interest in continuing as a musician. They did make a belated, if somewhat desultory and poorly distributed follow-up, *Destry Street*, in 1982. Recorded fast as a moneymarker, it's regarded by many — including the musicians who made it — as a letdown, but it's far better than its reputation allows. Quine's solos were never noisier than on "The Kid With The Replaceable Head" and "Downtown At Dawn", while "Time" stands as one of Hell's most affecting tunes. If its inclusion of three covers smacks of filler, they're revealing choices nonetheless. An obscure Kinks cut, "You Gotta Move", and The Troggs' "I Can Only Give You Everything" solidify The Voidoids' 60s garage leanings, while Bob Dylan's "Going, Going, Gone" (from *Planet Waves*) mirrors the weariness of so much of Hell's own writing. That *Blank Generation* drummer Marc Bell metamorphosed into Marky Ramone, while his *Destry Street* replacement Fred Maher became a studio producer, perhaps illustrates the ultimate difference between the two records. The former is a rockers' statement, the latter a studio construction, not in terms of production but in its raison d'être.

Whatever, The Voidoids' debut album alone is enough to justify their position in the punk pantheon. For his part, Hell is somewhat difficult about the claims some have made on behalf of The Voidoids' role in punk history. "I don't really have a view of that," he sighs. "When the subject comes up, I'll feel something or other according to the situation, but it's always different and never too weighty."

Hell has concentrated on writing ever since, completing his first novel, *Go Now*, in 1996 and is currently working on a second one.

Set in 1980, *Go Now* concerns a cross-country journey undertaken by a jumpy musician and his on-again off-again French lover; as the 1988-98 notebooks included in *Hot And Cold* show, Hell's been taking a lot of road trips too — several journeys down South, trips to Italy, Australia and England, a raft ride down the Mississippi with Legs McNeil, a search for rock 'n' roll in Rapid City, South Dakota. But *Hot And Cold* as a whole feels like a road trip, as Hell investigates each medium like a new town, bringing to it an attitude shaped by drugs, sex, music, Jean-Luc Godard, Orson Welles, Arthur Rimbaud, William Burroughs, you name it. Being the source of Johnny Roten's hairstyle, and any parallels between "Blank Generation" and The Pistols' "Pretty Vacant" or whatever, turn out to be just excursions on a much longer journey. "Blank Generation" was written two years before "Pretty Vacant" — and for that matter, a year before any of that stuff was called "punk", Hell recalls. "And "Vacant" came to be because, as Malcolm McLaren said, he told The Pistols to write a song like "Blank Generation"."

A
POET



BELOW, TOP TO BOTTOM:
HELL & VERLAINE'S
LITERARY ALTER EGO
THERESA STERN; THE
VOIDOIDS, 1977, WITH
ELVIS COSTELLO AT A
1978 BENEFIT GIG AT
NEW YORK'S CBGBs

At the same time, in the piece "I'm Not That Kind Of Girl," Hell realises that the book tour he's on for *Go* bears an uncanny resemblance to the rock tours he's done — and that one of the women he ends up with on the road is in fact a former English punk girl he'd slept with a dozen years earlier. While Hell has transcended the rock milieu, "now a middle-aged, solitary writer, temperamentally reclusive, even neurotic and mild, compared to the driven, psychotic, arrogant musician of old," his work and personality seem to cry out for the rock star treatment, intended or not. In one journal entry he writes, "You can dream the world into life. I did it with punk. I imagined what should be, carried it out, and left it to follow its life." That this is the only member of punk in the ten years and 40 pages of notebook entries presented here gives further indication of Hell's sense of "mission accomplished". Still, in March Matador is releasing *Time*, a double CD which includes a slightly expanded edition of the retrospective *RIP*, originally only available as a RDR cassette, plus a CD of Voidoids live tracks from 1977-78.

"I had this funny realignment of my perceptions when I finished the book," Hell tells me in the living room of the Lower East Side apartment he's resided in for the last 25 years. "It's an isolated work, as a novel is or a symphony, it's self contained, that's what I thought I was making and left that I'd done. I think it works as a book, not as an anthology, and not like a reader. It's a kind of hybrid mutant thing, but it's cohesive and it's like a mentality manifested in print, a sensibility. I really didn't think of it as exploring my 'punk' press, or as being 'honest' at all... But then the first reaction I see to it is someone describing it as a punk memoir, and I was really disappointed [Dennis Cooper referred to it in a review of Dee Dee Ramone's memoir as a supreme example of what a punk memoir could be, although he'd never actually seen it]. But then, when I was proofreading the book, I saw how you could see it that way. But the only reason it is that way is because I am me, who got called a punk, after I was me. I was me first, you know." He laughs. "So my work is my work, it's incidental to me that it's being classified as a certain kind of literary or musical movement or something. I didn't set out to join something, I did it, and other people did things that had a certain amount in common with it and it got this name attached to it. So it's inevitable, it's pointless to fight it."

"What I wanted to do," he continues, "was gather all the stuff that was in the files, a few pieces of which have come out in small editions, basically what the book turned out to be, all the lyrics, notebooks, essays, and a really carefully selected set of poems and then drawings and photos, carefully arranged. In the original there was no chronology or separation by genre. It's all mixed, and that was my original, very ambitious idea — to have it be just this flow that I very carefully organised to work."

It starts with poems written between 1969-73, within a year or so of Hell's flight from high school in Delaware to New York's Lower East Side. In those days, the poetry scene's leanings toward rock, such as they were, certainly did not reflect his own. "I thought the poets' taste in music, for the most part, was really corny. Even the ones I really respect, like Ted Berrigan, I know there's one place where he refers to The Incredible String Band [laughs]. There's Aram Saroyan's Beatles book, where it's one Beatles' name on each page, it's four pages long, I didn't want to know about the Beatles. Most of the New York poets were going around with flower ties and were all excited about marijuana and putting on Buffalo Springfield records. I never moved in the poets' crowd anyway. It was the same with Patti [Smith] — she was apart from them."

But it was this mimeographed poetry journals and small press poetry books that provided an impetus

and a template, when Hell and Verlaine ditched poetry to form a group together. "What I brought to music, from what I'd learned and seen from the underground poetry world, was that DIY approach," Hell says. "That's what was really a turn-on in NYC in the late 60s and early 70s, these poets rejected the traditional way of life as a poet of publishing in academic journals and literary magazines and getting jobs as teachers, because they were like street people and they didn't want that future and didn't like that kind of writing, so they took this approach of, 'We'll just do it on a budget we can afford and make books that have the spirit that excites us, and the larger publishers can come to us or not'. And often the big publishers did come to them, just as in music when we said, 'We're not gonna conform to the expectations of the music labels in order to make records for them, we're gonna make the records we want to and they can come to us or not'."

To illustrate his point, Hell pulls out a mimeographed, staple-bound copy of a 1974 pamphlet called *The Drunken Boat*, a version of the original Rimbaud poem by Ted Berrigan and illustrated by Jon Brumard. "That's such a gorgeous book by any standard, and it was done overnight for 20 bucks, on impulse," he asserts. The earliest NYC DIY 'punk' singles, Patti's "Hey Joe", Television's "Little Johnny Jewel" and Hell's own "Blank Generation" (the sleeves of which he printed himself in his apartment) take on a whole new significance in this light, as extensions of downtown aesthetics rather than another music industry trend.

Between *The Neon Boys*/Television, Hell's other major collaboration with Tom Verlaine was a 1973 book of poetry called *Wanna Go Out*, credited to Theresa Stern, and published on Hell's Dot imprint. Stern was in fact an imaginary author, represented visually by a superimposed photo of Hell and Verlaine in make-up and wigs. Perhaps this was a nod to Marcel Duchamp's alter ego Rose Sélavy? "It was more a conscious nod to the kid next door who liked to start fires in the basement," responds Hell enigmatically. "Rose was an artistic whimsy, Theresa was a wild freak. Rose lived on a couple of Duchamp's works. Theresa lived in Hoboken."

Wanna Go Out collects some of the poems from the book, plus an interview with Theresa (Hell, in fact) by Mary Harron [who went on to direct *I Shot Andy Warhol* and *American Psycho*] from Punk and a piece on The Heartbreakers from New York Rocker. Theresa made a comeback of sorts in the 80s. "I wrote a script about Theresa Stern," he says. "There was a time in the mid-80s I decided the next thing I wanted to do was to make a movie, so I wrote this script called *The Theresa Stern Story*. It was set ten years after the book was written and it was about a guy in NYC who had discovered the book that she wrote and gets fixated on her. He works in a used bookstore like the Strand and he has a band, and the band is getting popular but he's unhappy with the way everything is developing. He's fixed on her as being pure and decides that he's got to find her, and he's met the guy who published the book, who he's always grilling about her. So he tries to track her down and the clues he gets pan out and he finds her, and the movie's about this night that they spend together. I ended up shooting 20 minutes of it. Tom did the music, I ended up playing the role of the guy. It was a really ecstatic experience making the film, but it was my student film, there was a lot that was really great about it and there were other things about it that were weak. I would have had to have been completely singlemindedly persistent for five years to get it made, work on it to the exclusion of everything else and I wasn't willing to do that. I still have the idea that I want to make a movie, but I still have the idea that I want to make another CD and I don't know if I'll do that either."





Hell has never resumed the identity of a poet, however, "I haven't been prolific in poetry," he admits. "I basically stopped when I started doing rock 'n' roll, most of the impulse got channelled into songs. After I stopped doing music I started doing a lot more fiction and a certain amount of journalism. The poems have come when something really intense is going on. Some time before I die I hope I make a resolution to write one a week or something," he laughs. "I used to do these New Year readings at St Mark's Church and I always wanted to have a new poem for that, so I'd make myself write one and I'd always really like them. It's just requiring it of yourself."

Hell's Website, which he maintains himself, contains a selection of links to poets' work, amounting to a statement of his principal influences. The Web has proved the ideal medium for a career such as his, a cult figure whose MO remains fluid enough to bob into the wider public gaze occasionally (his sporadic movie appearances include a cameo with Madonna in *Desperately Seeking Susan* with Nick Zedd in *Rachel Amadio's* study of homelessness in New York, *What About Me*; and in Zedd's shockingly homo-Western *Geek Maggot Bingo*). "It's so cheap and easy to put up all this information," Hell enthuses about the Web. "It's just irresistible. It's such a cool medium because it's absolutely immediate, the moment something occurs to you you can do it, make this information available. And it's so cheap to store that it can just stay there, not go out of print like magazines or books. It's not only the information that's of interest to everybody in the world that's available to everybody in the world; now it's all the information of interest to anybody in the world that's available to everybody in the world [laughs]. That's a big difference..."

The Matador double CD leads off with several cuts from his tenure in *The Heartbreakers*, and the contents of the familiar *RIP* cassette. The second disc offers a full *Voodoos* set recorded at London's Music Machine in 1977 and an FM broadcast from New York's CBGBs in 1978, both previously unreleased. The four *Heartbreakers* cuts on *RIP* show Thunders and co still in post-Pelvis party mode, on versions of "Love Comes In Spurts", "Chinese Rocks", "Can't Keep My Eyes On You" and "Hurt Me". But it was with *The Voodoos*, particularly through the slashing yet jazz-inflected guitar playing of Robert Quine, that the implied menace of Hell's lyrics found its aural equivalent. Indeed, his songs didn't really find their own musical identity until he got to lead his own group. Consider the evolution of "Love Comes In Spurts". The original Neon Boys track with different lyrics is simple enough on the verses, but then each chorus has a different chord progression, plus a proto-*Marquee Moon* guitar break in the middle. *The Heartbreakers'* basic powerchord rock take still has Johnny Thunders's thumbprints all over it. It's the *Voodoos* version on *Blank Generation* that conveys a real sense of horror. This is the one that "murders your heart", with its frantic opening and the meanest sounding revision of the chord sequence to date. By alighting himself with Quine, a Velvet Underground disciple who's well-versed in both 50s and 60s rock, and is also a devotee of Bill Evans and mid-70s Miles Davis, Hell found the most fitting musical correspondence to his lyrics, which put the harsh and the familiar back to back - check the juxtaposition of "Erasing my face" and "I want you so bad" in "Another World". Such moments make you understand how *Blank Generation* might have fulfilled Hell's musical ambitions.

On *Time's* second disc, this is simply demonstrated by the brazen live takes of *Blank Generation* material. Hell has described the London show as the "most violent" the group ever played. To top it off, Johnny Rotten comes out at the end of the set, exhorting the crowd to demand an encore. (In a piece

written about the film *Sid & Nancy*, Hell further describes how Rotten later came backstage and told Hell he had a big nose]. Encore they did, with The Stones' "Ventilator Blues" - "partly calculated to offend the punks," Hell notes. The CBGBs set also boasts a Stones cover, "Shattered" - the only time they performed it - which is stunning in its resemblance to the *Voodoos'* other material. For "You Gotta Lose", they were joined onstage by Elvis Costello.

The night itself was a benefit for St Mark's Church. "St Mark's Church had a huge fire in '78 and basically burned down so we had a benefit at CBGBs to raise money for rebuilding the church [home of the Poetry Project]," he recalls. "I was headlining that night, and I knew Elvis. I don't know if it was before or after we toured together, but he was in town and came down to the gig and then he ended up doing the song with us. The audience was full of posits - Ginsberg was there, Ted Berrigan was there, Anne Waldman, Berrigan I'd never met but I was a big admirer of his, so I thought I would blow his mind, and that's what's going on at the beginning where I said, 'Let me tell you about what I did today I drank a Pappa and took a pill,' that's all references to poems of his. After that he was my best friend," he laughs.

"I haven't written many songs in the last 15 years," he continues, "but when I look at them I see how they all have very different forms but they're very strict. You'll have the weirdest rhyme schemes, like ABACD EBECD or whatever, but they'll follow that very strictly from stanza to stanza, it's funny. There's a lot of alteration and internal rhyme, they're very carefully put together."

Hell did not produce much music during the 1980s, although *RIP* contains four tracks recorded by an ad hoc group put together for a 1984 New Orleans appearance which included Meteors drummer Zeggy Modeliste. "The road manager and friend Jimmy Ford grew up in New Orleans and was always inviting me down there," he recalls. "People there are generous. Also there are a lot of good players - music's built into life there, I was at a place where I didn't really have a band and didn't know what to do with myself and I accepted Jimmy's latest offer and was given a house with a studio in it for a couple of months and was introduced to musicians."

But he has made two significant returns to recording during the last decade. The first was the early 90s *Dim Stars* project, instigated by Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore. "I didn't pay any attention to music in the 80s but I always thought that band has gotta be good because the name is so good," Hell laughs. After Sonic Youth covered their *Neon Boys* tune "That's All I Know Right Now", he got in touch with Thurston, who proposed the idea of a group with Reed singing two punk covers, *Umbralite* Aes' "The Plug" and Stickmen With Rayguns' "Christian Rat Attack". A 20 minute jam on "You Gotta Lose" and the original "Dim Stars Theme" completed the triple single, released on Moore's Ecstatic Peace label. Tickled with the results, Hell suggested a full length CD composed in the same style as the single. They would jam in the studio, Hell would then take the results home, write lyrics and record the vocals the next day. He's still disappointed that he didn't have more time to do the vocals right, but "sometimes I get this vision of how someone will listen to it in 40 years and think it's good as long as it's completely forgotten so they can discover it [laughs]. We just had different approaches, those guys are all about winging it and for me it's about working out parts. His other musical return was to record a new song, "Oh", in 2000 for the *Musik Blitz* Website, with the original *Voodoos* line-up.

More than music, sex and drugs appear to be the most common subjects in *Hot And Cold*. The few

pieces on musicians are posthumous reflections on heavy drug users Peter Laughner, Sid and Nancy, and Johnny Thunders. Even an anecdote about a former Hell drummer is footnoted with the fact he subsequently ODed. There's also a highly researched piece on the history of the criminalisation of heroin, and a reminiscence of William S Burroughs, where he takes pains to point out that the author was an addict to the end (not to mention several instances in the notebooks where Hell admits to relapsing into heroin use himself). As for sex, well, there are graphic drawings of gentiles, photos of penthouse lovers (and one nude photo of himself), a story about having sex with a clear and numerous journal entries and poems. "I'm nervous about the sexual material in the book because the coverage that it's gotten all gets dominated by that. It's such a charged subject that it just tends to overwhelm everything around it, especially in America, it's still Puritan," Hell laughs. "You can't get to sex," he muses, "sex is bigger than you. It contains you. How can you contain it? It's interesting to have insights into it but there's always something further to be said, so it all gets sort of futile. After a while things like that are more the subject for art than for intellectual analysis, I've got my own blind spots and hang-ups in my own psychology, I'm not saying that I'm kind of enlightened about what the real role of sex is in people's lives, but I don't hesitate to deal with it when it arises in my mind, and just as with most people it arises fairly often [laughs]."

Hell's appreciation of *The New York Dolls* may provide a key to his written fascination with sex and dope - in a piece on Johnny Thunders, he writes that the group spoke to the kids "in a language of drugs and sex". "They were true to life," asserts Hell, "that was the common ground everybody had and they didn't make a big deal about it, they just shared it with you, you had that in common with them, it was taken for granted the way you can with a friend. It was great because it disposed of all the grown ups who disapproved of that kind of behaviour and also of the outsiders who would have to be aware of it, it was real life. And that's what I always wanted to do with music. The second Television poster that I made, the heading was 'True Life Presents Television', that was really the purpose. The "tell it like it is" approach brings to mind Burroughs's definition of naked lunch - "when one sees what is on the end of every fork". In the piece "My Burroughs", Hell comments on the late writer's "fearless unattachment. He has no vested interest in how things are or his own response to them". This hints at the crux of *Hot And Cold*'s title, one Hell considers appropriate "because there was this extreme, in your face erotic stuff, and then there was some cruel but basically indifferent attitude going on too".

Although it's arranged in chronological order, the variety in *Hot And Cold* is staggering - topics alone range from US military presence in El Salvador to poet Bill Knott to running away from home as a kid. Travel, drugs, the Hell/Teresa Stern aliases, the moves from poetry to rock 'n' roll and beyond: *Hot And Cold* ultimately serves as an index to a life of departure. Hell's aesthetic can be summed up by his desire always to be leaving, always shedding the skin he's in. Recall the opening of "Blank Generation": "I was sayin' let me out of here/Before I was even born." Or the opening of a poem called "Huck Hell & Legs Sawyer On The Mississippi", "I've forever amazed at how much fun it is to leave," Hell concludes. "Just to leave. Arving has its points, but leaving is inexpressible. And what better opportunity for leaving could there be than a drift down the river, because what does a river do, but leave." □ *Hot And Cold* is published by Powerhouse. Time will be released by Matador in March. Website: www.roharchell.com

YOU
MAKE
ME



LUNATIC FRINGE

TANGENTS, WHETHER REAL OR IMITATED, THE RAW, UNMEDIATED EXPRESSION OF MAD ARTISTS HAS ALWAYS EXERTED A SPECIAL PULL IN THIS PERSONAL TAKE ON THE MUSIC INDUSTRY'S AMBIVALENT RELATIONSHIP WITH LUNACY, BEN WATSON GOES IN SEARCH OF THE 'TRUE VISION' OF THE INSANE. FRDM SKIP SPENCE AND WILD MAN FISCHER TO SCHOENBERG, MESSIAEN, THE KLINGER CLUB, ADOLF WÖLFLI, PUNK AND THE MAD PRIDE MDVEMENT.

ILLUSTRATION: NON-FORMAT

Madness is a hot commodity in music. In 1999, Sundazed made a splash by reissuing *Our*, originally made 30 years earlier by Alexander 'Skip' Spence. Moby Grape's frontman had just spent six months in the psychiatric ward of New York's Bellevue Hospital after drugs and black magic had transformed him into a pyjama-clad mad axeman. It's easy to understand *Our*'s popularity: Spence's winsome folk rock is recorded with a directness that suits the late 90s fad for unplugged and lo-fi campfire confessions, an American Nick Drake. Like Charlie Parker's wrecked West Coast sides, or those recorded by Billie Holiday at the end of her tether, there's ample room for sentimental projection in Spence's pauses and imperfections. However, such 'actuality' is by no means the exclusive province of the certifiably insane, as any listener to the Sun, Chess, Goldband or Inousie back catalogues knows: maybe in a streamlined pop world, 'madness' is just a name for nonconformism and grit.

In his review of *Our* in *Rolling Stone* on 20 September 1969, Greil Marcus waxed lyrical. He was convinced it wouldn't sell, but told readers to buy it before it disappeared forever. Marcus describes the album's winning lack of polish by saying, "Sometimes his playing is about as good as Wild Man Fischer's." This refers to a notorious album, *An Evening With Wild Man Fischer*, released the same year, in which the issues of empowerment and exploitation were stacked up in multiple layers of provocative irony: a premier Frank Zappa production, released in the same clutch as his own *Uncle Meat* and Captain Beefheart's *Trot Mask Replica*. Wild Man Fischer had been committed to mental institutions several times, and this was his bid for stardom, a double album in a gatefold sleeve. Today, despite pressure from the Wild Man Fischer Fan Club, the Frank Zappa Estate won't license a re-release, calling it "a poor example of [Zappa's] production skills". Actually, it's exemplary: suddenly not only Frank Zappa's own music, but also the relationship of madness to music – and to workaday 'normality' – start to look clear. The album is a model of sceptical realism: madness is treated as a social phenomenon rather than a mystery.

The critics at *Rolling Stone* hated Zappa (Lester Bangs praised *Hot Rats*, but that was it). They wanted golden longhairs, minstrels, or charismatic protest singers like Bob Dylan, not some Dadist anticipating the generic miscegenations which exploded in the 90s. Dave Marsh called *An Evening With...* "a particularly vicious example of Zappa's penchant for sadistic social commentary. The results are brutal, not funny except to the emotionally immature and the socially callous, and would constitute a deleted embarrassment in recorded history if the record industry had any shame."

Marsh's idea of 'talent' – a commodity Fischer appeared to lack in abundance, since his tunes are the kind of 'non-songs' made up by five year olds, or adults nosily regressing in their bathrooms – blinded him to Zappa's intent, his curiosity about the revealing aspects of 'mad' expression, its implied critique of the limits of official culture. Zappa's interest in the creativity of the insane had not been seen since the work of Hans Prinzhorn, the progressive art historian of the 1920s. We hear a street recording of Wild Man Fischer selling songs for a dime in front of the Whisky A Go-Go and the Hamburger Hamlet on LA's Sunset Strip. Zappa had Art Tripp's overclub percussion, turning the chaos of shouted exchanges, laughter and traffic noise into a Dada suite. Tripp's needlesharp rattles, bell chimes and marimba plops add a sinister, broken clock dimension, recalling the accompaniment of Arnold Schoenberg's *Premot Lunare*, which launched 20th century musical modernism by using the alien of madness. Atonal pointillism is used to open a window on the unconscious, questioning the assumption that

THE ~~TOP~~
W.H.D. MANF. FISCHER
MFG. CO. YOU NEED THEM TOMORROW
THE BREAKERS

卷之三

THE ROLLING STONES

ବିବାହରେ "କାନ୍ତି" କଥାରେତ୍ତିବ୍ରତ

גָּתָן תְּבִרְךָ

THE CROWN

內蒙古 通訊 1958年第1期

THE STATE

BY H. B. HORN

向日葵風景の絵

મનુષ્ય એવીએ ક્રમાંક લાગે

የኢትዮ አኅመድ ተስፋዬ



TOP: ALEXANDER 'SKIP' SPENCE; BOTTOM: HUGH METCALFE
AVOIDING A STINKER AT THE KLINKER

the listener is above the drives, pain and fantasies in poor Larry Fischer. When Fischer says he has voices in his head ("fighting each other, it's like a disease"), the commotion writhes in our skulls too.

At Fischer's request, the sleeve carried a diagram, showing the relative status of stars in contemporary pop. It's pretty astute for a madman. At the bottom we find Zappa, Chubby Checker and Fabian – and Wild Man Fischer "before he met Frank Zappa", in the middle there is Johnny Cash, and Fischer "after he met Frank Zappa". At the top are The Beatles saying "hello down there" to The Stones, Elvis, Cream, Mozart, Hendrix, Tiny Tim and The Mothers. Whizzing to the very top, up above The Beatles – "after you hear this album" – is Wild Man Fischer.

The fantasy is really not so farfetched. By dint of the repeated broadcast and media accolades granted those who generate profits for powerful interests, pop is replete with musically restricted mediocrities who have somehow been transmogrified into untouchable stars. The human need for silly ditties – previously supplied by family sing-alongs and playground chants – is turned over to a voracious commercial machine, replacing people's everyday fun by the illusion that only bought product can hit the spot. If you list the topics dealt with by Fischer – freak commercialism, autumn and time, social conflict, desire and repression, Hollywood mortality – his treatments are both more realistic and more varied than most pop albums. When Zappa arranges a "fancy version" behind Fischer's yelping voice, the strange combination of consummate arrangement and amateur vocals has the charm of The Monkees. When Fischer tells us that he was put in an insane asylum for singing at work, he introduces a social dimension which abstract confrontations of madness and normality never examine. Why work to earn money to buy albums by people who are just like yourself? Only those repelled by Dada's project of art by non-specialists will dismiss Wild Man Fischer's record. Those who turn on to Wild Man Fischer, on the other hand, make a friend for life.

Larry Fischer went on to make two LPs for Rhine Records. While lacking the Dada selfconsciousness of Zappa's production, his energy and charm endure. "Don't Be A Singer" was a heartbreakingly attack on his treatment by the music industry. Nevertheless, unlike the 57 varieties of nihilist formalism thrown up by the art avant garde, *An Evening With Wild Man Fischer* is a truly inexhaustible document. Madness is dismantled as a category: facile assumptions about mental illness and 'normality' are challenged by stark criticism of the hurt inflicted on the psyche by the star system, and of the alienation and unfreedom of regular wage labour.

It is no accident that such heavy themes should be raised by Wild Man Fischer and his obsession with music. Exaggerated attention to music has long been deemed a species of madness, as if any pursuit not centred on words must be deemed insane. When satirist Billy Jenkins named his London based unit of moonlighting jazzers The Voice Of God Collective and coined the slogan, "Music is the religion", he expertly nailed the peculiar mix of certainty and proselytising zeal of music obsessives. We believe our favourite music is crucial, important, true. Such certainty defies the pluralism and tolerance of polite discourse, asserting unmediated response and inner conviction over logic. René Descartes got it wrong: the modern, secular, enlightened soul isn't the pinhead glint, it's music.

Mad Pride is a new civil rights movement. It promises to do what the Gay Pride and Black Pride movements have done, but this time for those suffering from the stigma of mental 'illness' (past or present). Given the affinity of music with unreasonable truths, it's unsurprising that Mad Pride has an active musical



MENTAL AS ANYTHING
(TOP TO BOTTOM):
JIM MACDOUGALL'S AURAL
GUERRILLA, A BELGIAN
COMPILATION IN AID OF
MENTAL HEALTH. THE MAD
PRIDE BOOK, WILD MAN
FISCHER'S NOTORIOUSLY
GERANGED FIRST ALBUM

wing, Mad Pride benefits have been performed by Alternative TV, Ceramic Hobbs, Hystena Ward, The Astronauts, Fish Brothers and Alabama 3. Last year saw the release of a 20 track compilation, *Notters With Attitude*, on Mad Pride Records. In Berlin, under the banner of the Iren Defensive, radical psychiatrists and rebel patients hold public trials. Anti-psych intellectuals steeped in the works of Michel Foucault denounce crimes committed by the state's thought police. In Hackney, they release a punk album.

To be fair, Mad Pride has also issued eloquent and barbed leaflets denouncing corporate drug profiteering and New Labour's viciously repressive legislation on 'sectioning' (psychiatric confinement). In London, it has organised protests, pickets of Parliament and Archway Road's 'suicide bridge', and published an anthology of tales by mental health patients (*Mad Pride: A Celebration Of Mad Culture*, a volume I helped put together). Crucially, Mad Pride is free of the odorous whiff of condescension which pervades too many mental health initiatives.

Mad Pride uses punk's black humour to break with the cap-in-hand cosiness of government-approved mental patient organisations. Instead, to cite its manifesto, it intends to "celebrate madness in all its forms as a means to all-out social revolution". Although no one mentions André Breton, Mad Pride is really a street version of surrealism. The curious ping-pong between British pop and the Parisian avant garde documented in Greil Marcus's *Lipstick Traces* has been possible because surrealists and Situationists, intellects focused on images and theory, ignored music: Mad Pride is a "pong" to follow the "ping" which Malcolm McLaren, Jamie Reid and The Sex Pistols inflicted on the rock-rejecting Situationists.

But how 'mental' is Mad Pride music? The most affecting track on the CD is "Communication Failure" by Alternative TV, where Mark Perry's trembling voice, its blunt honesty hovering on the edge of a 'mad' rejection of social status – reveals disconcerting truths. Liverpool's Ceramic Hobbs play sets of Stooges covers in costumes appropriate to the Antennae Jimmy Semmens fan club; their track was "written by silent partners, underwritten by a giraffe" and "produced in a slimy cave by JE Marquino". Amongst some keening folk, DIY Techno and incongruous Country, it's the punk rock that makes most sense. Punk's reversal of values, the heretical notion that the outcasts of society are its true prophets and judges, finds an authentic expression in Mad Pride groups like Ceramic Hobbs, Shockheaded Peters and The Astronauts.

Responding to an anti-stigma campaign launched by the World Health Organisation, the Belgian government declared 2001 the Year of Mental Health. *Psychoasis*, a CD of pop tracks, was issued by Het Miss Verstand in Antwerp, a "non-profit organisation founded by Belgian creative minds engaged in mental health care". "Inspired by the inner world of the wrong tracked mind," both music and package – sponsored by Janssen-Cilag, KBC Bank & Verzekering and the Cera Foundation – lack the scrofulous rage and laughter surrounding Mad Pride. Psychoasis' madness is light and cute, unperched by underdog pain or protest: you're never skewered on the pin of your listener patronage, Lydon-style. Two versions of Napoleon XIV's 1966 novelty hit, "They're Coming To Take Me Away, Ha-Haa" – by The Shockheaded Peters on *Notters*, and by Rob Vanoudenhoven (a Belgian TV personality) on *Psychoasis* – graphically illustrate the opposed meanings that contrasting social positions can impose on an identical lyric. Punk gives Mad Pride the prophetic, insurrectionary quality of Ian Sinclair's "sectioned carpet-chewers" in *Lights Out For The Territory*: "Folks who live with the daily horror of seeing things as they actually are."

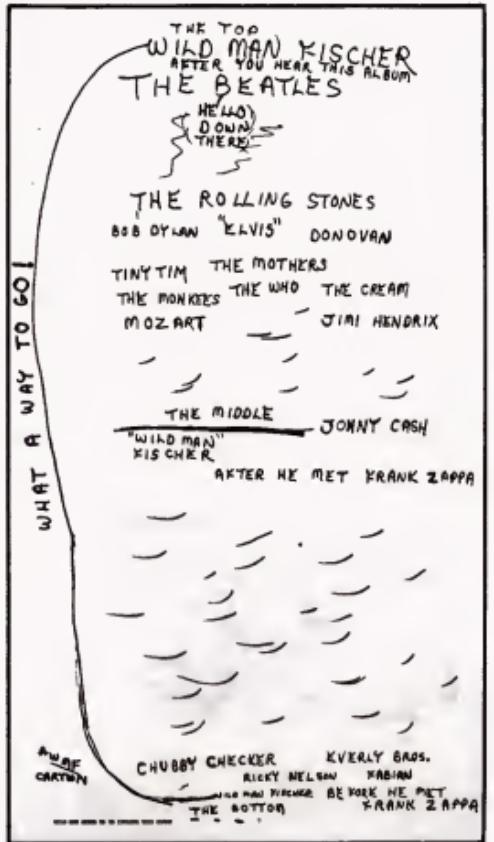
One contributor to the Mad Pride volume, Jim MacDougall, made an impromptu performance during

an Alternative TV gig at London's Union Chapel back in 1999. MacDougall's presence makes an audience sweat, gives it a taste of actuality. His group Aural Guerilla recorded a two CD set "out of virtue and boredom, rather than expecting huge sums of money and status in the music world". They disbanded in 1999 when "the vocalist simply became impossible to work with". On the CD, MacDougall's roulette is so attuned to the chugging, low key punk rhythms, it's as if they were invented for the cadences of his voice. Like the speech recordings of William S Burroughs, you're lulled into his stories, then brought up short by how violent and disgusting they are. Is it him, or the way he's been treated? Is he what the tabloids call an "evil influence"? The listener wriggles on MacDougall's artful hook with a sense of startled outrage, staring at the singer's Polaroid of his own scrawny feet on the cover, printed in sperm-tinted yellows. Now hawkish a solo CD, MacDougall declares that he is disappointed with the "opportunist" at Mad Pride and is looking for "something else". The congruence between Mad Pride and punk suggests that punk's proletarian critique of the spectacle isn't finished, merely suppressed.

However, rockist populism can be musically restrictive. If Mad Pride's "celebration of madness" were genuinely pitched against the capitalist star system, would it only favour genres already heavily 'promoted in pop'? When early 80s chartbound poppers Madness named themselves after a Prince Buster song, the self-styled 'Natty Boys' merely added to a long tradition in carnival and music hall. The only 'attitude' to be derived from Madness's singer Suggs – today a TV personality – is entertainment as escape valve, a confirmation of capitalism's work/leisure split. The phrase 'mad for it', used to death in today's youth-targeted adverts, derives from Manchester's Hacienda scene of the early 80s. The drug-fuelled hedonism of 'Madchester', so different from The Fall's sceptical sneer, lacked the aesthetic or political suss to resist commercial banality. What would a Mad Pride outfit sound like that genuinely didn't care about the commercial success that allowed its madness to warp the form of the music? Maybe it would sound avant garde...

The 20th century musical avant garde was launched by Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* in 1912 (thus predating Luigi Russolo's *Art Di Noses* manifesto by a year). It was quite explicitly mad, being a suite of texts sung spoken by a moon-touched loon. Schoenberg's compositional devices – demented musicbox chimes, unravelling melodic lines, vacant repetitions, clashing tutti, sped up hysteria, pukash vocalise – might have become clichés of musical dementia, but performances of the score can still be shattering, especially if interpreters refuse smooth academic correctness and realise its sonic shocks. If performances involving mouth improvers such as Phil Minton, Vanessa Mackness or Shelley Hirsch 'sound like Pierrot Lunaire', it's not because they're pastiching Schoenberg. His attention to historical necessity – the gradual accumulation of chromaticism in symphonic music, the increasingly demented, one-off nature of compositions themselves – meant opening the door to affective sonority, timbral specificity and clashing juxtapositions: a violent subversion of tempered, sonata form logic.

The innovations of Pierrot Lunaire were later formalised as 12 tone, Schoenberg's score-based proposal for superseding classical tonality. However, Pierrot Lunaire's free atonality can be reduced to no schema except an expressionist discovery that madness – a complete dislocation from tradition, an immediate confrontation with the musical materials – packs a charge lacking in traditional procedures. This development had parallels in the visual arts. An art



THE WORLD ACCORDING TO WILD MAN FISCHER

history graduate named Hans Prinzhorn was appointed by the Heidelberg Psychiatry Clinic in 1919 to make a collection of the art of the insane. Paul Klee and Max Ernst were both impressed by his published catalogue, which might in modern art derive from their respectful attention to insane modes of expression. The Nazis, who considered both the tone and modern art were "degenerate," targeted this link. Before they rounded up the trade unionists, socialists and Jews, the Nazis executed the inhabitants of mental homes because they were "economically expendable." Meanwhile, the Jewish/Bolshevik modern art that found urgent messengers in the art of the insane was banned.

Another 20th century innovator, Olivier Messiaen, was a Roman Catholic and no revolutionary, yet he expanded modern music by a traditional resource of the insane: he listened to the birds. The realisation that nature is a living terrain of intention and communication implies that human society is not different in kind. Consciousness is simply what happens when one species of animals begins to develop socially and so requires language. This insight can be devastating to Kantian common sense, which erects a metaphysical barrier between humanity and non-signifying natural forms. Flowers have been depicted for centuries, but by transcribing the sound of songbirds, themselves as unique and varied as flowers, Messiaen asked an openness to natural beauty that bordered on madness. Try finding a park, lying down and listening to the birds: you'll weep that anything can be so beautiful, and yet so alien to how our everyday lives are currently organised. Yet Messiaen, close to madness as he was, also applied the anti-representational principles of 12 tone to rhythm, and so invented serialism at the end of the 1940s, a procedure which has been denounced as 'hyper-rational', 'cerebral' and 'merely theoretical'. How to explain this madness?

Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze set up a stark opposition between rationality and madness, between depression and freedom. Their dualism cannot map Messiaen's practice. The point is that, like any affective scientist or artist, Messiaen did not choose between madness and rationality, but pursued Freud's programme of "where it was. Ego shall be": a dialectical investigation of the hitherto unknown. He opened his ears to the birds, but by transcribing them and inserting their songs into his music, he brought them into the realm of musical understanding and collective event. Likewise, his experiments with serialising rhythm generated bizarre new beauties. Some events spin out from his maths like surreal coral reefs. The lesson Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen derived from Messiaen was that mind and matter are not forever sundered, the intellect and emotion forever opposed. A rational grasp of the structure of music can body forth new emotions and experiences. The feelings engendered by these innovations are so vivid they become obsessions of a society locked in the grey hibes of social ritual.

Karl Marx argued that humanity is not something external to material nature, a divine essence like the Platonic or Pauline soul. Following Darwin, he called labour power an evolved but natural force. Sensism likewise refused a dualism between humanity and nature, finding 'natural' beauty in 'artificial' interruptions of harmony and rhythm. Its techniques allow genuine dialogue with other musical cultures and non-exploitative use of new technologies like recording, amplification and sampling. Western music, which reject the innovations of sensism, on the other hand, tend to reduce exotic materials to mere coloration. When John Coltrane proposed his 'ecumenical World Music', he found he needed both tonality and serialized rhythm. When Carter Santana synthesized an 'ecumenical' (Hindi) Muir author:

sernalism, he produced New Age kitsch. Like Phnstrom's "art of the insane", the madness of Schoenberg and Messiaen was the dialectical turn against Western tradition required for a genuine (rational?) approach to materials like the Balinese gamelan or spoken word on tape.

In this connection, Graeme Revell – a New Zealand psychiatric nurse who founded the Australia/UK based Industrial group SPK, named after Sozialistische Patienten Kollektiv, the German mental patient protest group which turned to terrorism in the wake of Baader-Meinhof – issued a tellingly flawed experiment. He attempted to realise the "insane scores" of Adolf Wölfli, a psychiatric patient whose work was licensed by the 20s avant garde. By using then newly available equipment, including the Fairlight keyboard, Revell turned Wölfli's ideas into harmony-rich music, reducing his madness to exotic new material. He also did the same with bush recordings of insects. As reproduced in the booklet, Wölfli's collages and scores (one includes a Campbell's soup tin, three decades before Warhol) look fascinating, but Revell's interpretations were too smooth and controlled to sound like anything but post-*eno* Ambient.

Was Revell "exploiting" Wölfli's madness? In New York, a Mad Pride delegation picketed a showing of the Phnstrom collection, denouncing it as an exploitation of schizophrenics. Should we wax intelligent versus Revell? Moral outrage is a blunt instrument in aesthetics. Revell's sleeve notes may evoke reactionary notions of artistic transcendence, but they're full of respect for the insane. Certainly, one should point out that he was mistaken to use pretty harmonies; Wölfli's scores aren't "beautiful", they are wrecked and hurt and strange, a wild concatenation of elements closer to Dada than the church. Religious fragments in Wölfli's collage scores gave Revell an excuse to indulge modish High Minimalist effects, manoeuvres which sound grottingly commercial today.

Italian music theorist Marco Mazzoni defines the dialectic of modern art as "mediation criticised by immediacy". He is using Hegelian terms to describe the joy unreached in a musical performance when "something happens", when a poetic situation lifts people out of repetition and ritual. Mediation describes established methods of organising sound, the equipment and skills of musicians and sound technicians. By immediacy, Mazzoni means recognition of the absolute specificity of any social occasion (something denied by the classical repertoire, which freezes certain works, often themselves revolutionary in intent, and presents them as timeless Platonic "forms"). When Freud developed psychoanalysis, he did not apply generalisations or wield statistics, thus reducing his patients to objects. He examined specific case histories, developing his theories to fit each case. The insistent "immediacy" of modern music requires treatment.

When Captain Trip Records, a Tokyo label run by a Krautrock freak, issued *Gyakusou* in 1997 – an album recorded at Kogari Temple by *Sei-sou*, defined in the sleeve notes as "intellectually handicapped" Japanese priests – its intentions might have been either empowering or exploitative. However, *Sei-sou* music develops and flows, implying some kind of collective freedom and awareness. Still, the *Sei-sou* priests' use of rock 'n' roll rhythms could teach The London Improvisers Orchestra a lesson or two about unoppressive pulse. Though no guarantee of musical relevance, madness and naivety can open doors closed to minds fixated on quality and sophistication. On the other side of the Pacific, San Francisco group *Volox* are fronted by a singer named Anti-Honey who suffers from brain damage, but the musical technique of the group is advanced and reckless enough to regress to his vocal actuality with conviction.

Experiences of madness are as varied as the individuals themselves, so in order to explain how madness and music might self-lumine in ways that go beyond Mad Pride's agit-prop punk, I shall have to stoop to confessional mode. In 1983, I went mad. The most striking aspect of my delusions was an apocalyptic sense of significance: everything and everyone around me related to my most urgent libidinal and political impulses. There was no waiting, no concept of "yesterday or tomorrow", no debt to the past: I lived in Stockhausen's "moment time". There was no passive reception of ideology, no hierarchy of media power, everything was dialogue, every social transaction was visible and public. TV was not simply a receiving device, it also passed on signals from your living room. The newscaster wasn't at Broadcasting House, he was the old bore with a blue suit and grey toupee four doors down the street, pontificating about world events from his sofs. At the height of my mania I was sectioned for two weeks (as is typical in such cases, the worst experience was the year of depression that followed). Since my recovery, I've found that free improvisation is the only musical form which regularly reminds me of my "mad" insistence on immediacy, for an event in which everything has significance, and no person or shiny doorknob or shout in the street is excluded from the total composition. In this respect, it's significant that the two musicians who span the worlds of Mad Pride and free improvisation are Mark Perry and improvising saxophonist Lol Coxhill, both of whom are noted for unironic sensitivity to venue-specific situations.

Hugh Metcalfe, who runs the Kink Club in North East London, believes that free improvisation is useful therapy for mental patients, and treasures his experience of playing both inside and outside psychiatric institutions. However, although the group he runs with poet Bob Cobbing, Bindye, is far "madder" than anything in Mad Pride's roster, it results from a worked out critique of the alienation and passivity instilled by commercial media. Metcalfe's notorious references to body noise might be deemed Artistic but, like his seaside postcard sense of humour debunks any recycled art glamour. "Many a time after gigs I've had people say, 'Keep on the medication,'" he remarks, "but of course I'm totally straight. What's called 'madness' – I don't use the word – can be heightened sensitivity to people's reactions. I was a gay patient at the Whittington Psychiatric Hospital. I had a breakdown after my son was born in 1986. Anyone can end up in psychiatric hospital. Very good psychiatrist, Dr Dalton, who was very much into therapy and not giving you medication. Drugs are a quick way out for over-worked doctors, talking is better. I'm now back to music, running a club and being extremely busy. I met brilliant people in there. Also distressing – seven friends committed suicide, some "inside", others were musicians and teachers who were living "outside", supposedly. I ran a music therapy course with the staff nurse, and we had fantastic sessions in the common room, 15 people improvising, basically. Music's an easier way to communicate than talking. People who can't have relationships but love music come to the Kink Club, make friends. It's like an extended family." After speaking the preceding sentences into my tape recorder outside the Vortex, a jazz and free improvisers' club in Stoke Newington, London, where he had been showing films and playing guitar with improvising pianist Varyan Weston, Metcalfe felt the need to howl a Cobbing-style sound poem into the chill night air.

Involved in his own campaign against psychic alienation, Metcalfe is suspicious of the sensationalist and populist thrust of Mad Pride: "They should lobby doctors who prescribe drugs and suggest alternative treatments – their choice of music is patronising," he

contends. True enough, two marques of ee-ay-addio punk units in relentless succession at the Mad Pride Festival in Clissold Park, London in July 2000 did make me long for some genuinely mad free improvisation to interrupt the ritual. However, Mad Pride gigs are special. It's hard to play the rock game of celebrity widow or sonic terrorist in front of an audience of self-confessed nutters. There's an atmosphere of non-hierarchical fun and civility I've not experienced in many lowdown rock venues since the early 80s. Nevertheless, though the impact of punk bonehshakers like Underdog and Los Paralyticos is undeniably therapeutic, the collective thrill of thrash is more like relief from the threat of madness than an artistic crystallisation of its de-escalating highs.

A dialectic between enlightenment and unreason structures senilism and free improvisation is not the only way of relating madness to music. Since Elvis Presley brought the rattlesnake-clutching madness of rockabilly to the mass market, pop music has been bedded with sensationalist lunacy and psychic casuistry. Yet if there's one lesson to be learned from Mad Pride, it is that the mad are not some exotic type, but unfortunates who are completely involved with psychic forces which should be thoroughly familiar to so-called "sane" minds. Art plays with such forces or becomes a sterile exercise.

Records by the genuinely certifiably insane provoke heated debate in which claims of empowerment are countered by accusations of exploitation. In other words, the row is a subset of the debate that surrounds all pop music, where (at its best) singers and musicians without access to social status or capital are invited to flaunt themselves in public to make someone else a buck. Can one really distinguish between the name 'madness' of the juvenile rapper, promised the world and then put in an impossible situation regarding drugs, money and guns – and who winds up with a bullet in his head – and the mental disintegration of Syd Barrett, Skip Spence and Roky Erikson? The pop industry devours naivety and wrecks lives: what's to distinguish between 'certified' madness and the maddening notion that the potty amateurism of Jonathan Richman's "Road Runner" could make its singer a star?

A useful rule of thumb might be the singer's ability to face the world rationally, but in a world where "economic rationality" entails starvation, privatisation and weapons fairs – what's rationality? As Varyan Weston puts it, "Who's mad? Someone who walks around with a dustbin on their head, or Lyndon B Johnson dropping bombs on Hanoi? Star Wars is madder than anything. RD Laing's ideas were good stuff, but they were suppressed by behaviourism and Pavlov Institute reward/punishment theory in the 80s. The Kink Club has got it right. It will remain pure and fertile in its madness, it can't be co-opted like rock."

The Kink Club and Mad Pride use music to challenge psyche oppression in contrasting ways. If they're not exclusive alternatives, it's because, despite the musical differences of those involved, they face an identical cruelty, the same social system. Lol Coxhill and Mark Perry's redefinition of music as situation, a singleton collective event, is one way of bridging that gap. Another possible bridge requires theoretical input. By understanding what we're up against – namely the commodification and alienation of musical experience under capitalism – Mad Pride might recognise the pertinence of musical freedom, while Improvisers might find ways of making their hatred of commercial duplicity more graphic, public and politically instant. As Guy Debord noted, "It's only when we fail to comprehend the enemy that splits appear in our camp." □ Mad Pride: A Celebration Of Mad Culture (edited by Ted Currid, Robert Dekker, Esther Leslie & Ben Warson) is published by Spore Change

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Compiled by Frank Bremert, A Musik/Song, Kaiser-Giebichenstein 20-30, 50670 Cologne, Germany, www.aking.com

Compiled by Maximo Rico aka Touching Extremes, space-between.de/musicsystem/touchingextremes

Compiled by Ross Forman, Continuous Drift, WZBC 93.3 FM (Brockton, Massachusetts, USA), Tuesdays 10pm-11pm, www.wzbc.com

Compiled by The Wiz Sound System

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, readers, etc. Email editor@twev.co.uk



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PHOTO: DAIR AVADIT
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Soundcheck

February's selected CDs, albums and singles



Dressed from the waist up: the only known photo of Rhythm & Sound's Mark Ernestus and Moritz Von Oswald, with former vocalist Tiki Man (out of frame)

RHYTHM & SOUND

RHYTHM & SOUND

RHYTHM & SOUND LDC1042 CD

Mark Ernestus and Moritz Von Oswald, who first emerged from the Berlin Techno scene as Basic Channel, stood apart from the surge tide of mid-90s hard minimal Trance in their willingness to slow down and dismember their own sound, to the delight of an ever-increasing audience. Though both artists work in different styles on different labels, it is as Rhythm & Sound that their Rothko-like ability to define vast space with minimal means (and beats), and their affection for the textures and aleatory editing of reggae have met to best effect.

Rhythm & Sound's first album, 1998's Showcase, was issued on their Burial Mix imprint and collated the duo's initial five singles in order of release. Von Oswald and Ernestus took a monomaniacal approach to cultivating the atmosphere that was their signature. From source code created by programming minimalist approximations of mid-70s Jamaican cultural rhythms, the duo spun gold from signal processing, moulding the intangibles of filtering, reverberation and echo feedback to their best advantage. That the music was first issued on 10" duplates was of no small significance to the R&S crew: like the mid-70s dubs of songs recorded at Lee Perry's Black Ark studio, the R&S "versions" freighted the identically effects-laden humidity of the songs from which they were derived, with A-side vocalist Tiki Man allowed random, momentary turns. Every track was slightly over six minutes in length. Recalling Perry's phasenshifted mixes, the studio 'air', being mostly layers of tape

hiss, itself became a component of rhythm, the only difference being that Rhythm & Sound dispensed with extra musicians, the better to hear the treated essence of that air. Built to close tolerances, stripped to its essential working parts (right down to the packaging) and entirely hypnotic, Showcase was a dub purist's equivalent of a Dogme 95 film.

After three years' wait, its sequel has arrived. Rhythm & Sound, unmistakably forged from an equally well considered blueprint, but its agenda is wobbler still. Both the (un)title and the C0's murky cover art (a grey-on-black trail of vapour, or is it ganga smoke?) point to a further blackness of the duo's music. Although this disc collects singles released over past couple of years, it has the cohesion of an album conceived as a whole. Earlier Basic Channel EPs contained few tracks, but were equivalent to full albums in length; these had to be severely edited for release on CD. The Rhythm & Sound tracks now resemble those earliest Basic Channel works in form, often running to epic lengths in works involving not rhythm but what by now is the R&S signature: soling on effects boxes. "No Partial" opens the set; the track was initially paired with "Higher Field Marshall" by The Walkers Band, a melodic-led instrumental issued in October 2001 on the PK label. "Mango Drive" also surfaced as a version side, R&S's take on "Mango Walk" by Brooklyn reggae producer Bullwinkle. Few contemporary electronic artists – fellow Berliner Stefan Betke (aka Pole) is one exception – have a better understanding of reggae's spirit than Rhythm & Sound. However, for Von Oswald and Ernestus, as for Pole, slowly but surely Jamaica is

Richard Henderson hears the Berlin dubmeisters spin gold out of studio air

slipping over the horizon as the source of a governing paradigm. With each succeeding track, even minimal rhythmic underpinnings are deleted by degrees, replaced by encroaching levels of noise and effects output. Ambience for its own sake – albeit a snifter, rumbling ambience – increasingly becomes the order of our anxious day.

The only vocal track is the deceptively titled "Smile". Vocalist Savage – Tiki Man, whose voice was all over Showcase, seems to have dropped out of the picture, although he has crept up on scattered forays with Tawfarer – surfs the slow tremolo of white noise, ominous kickdrum thumps and isolated chortle stabs, his phrasing resembling Prince Far I's reading of the Psalms. The R&S crew, adding slapback echo and an overall tone contour modelled on a basement's darkest corner, successfully distil the frightening, impalpable essence of early roots classics like Psalms Far I on this cut and throughout the balance of the disc. "Imprint", the inky chimeras occupying the closing spot, rarely disperses with rhythm altogether for 17 minutes. A vortex of cumulative machine hiss and subaqueous keyboards predominates, its surface broken only by the occasional spray of tightly spaced echo reflections from those drum hits that manage to rise above the murk.

In an era of antisitic Powerbook creations, it is heartening to hear artists couring through the digital domain making a bonafide decision to steer for the messier outer limits of sound, and doing so without adding to the glitch glut. As hard to pin down as the smoke it most resembles, Rhythm & Sound is very dread indeed. □

BADAWI SOLDIER OF MIDEAN

ROB RUSSELL CO
BY JEROME MAUNSELL

Roz Meesai's latest album as Badawi offers more intense sonic pressure than his first two recordings for RQR, *Bedouin Sound Clash* (1996), and *Jerusalem Under Fire* (1997). Both these albums earned him comparisons with dubmasters King Tubby, Lee Perry and Augustus Pablo, but for this release he has stepped up the righteous re-another notch. Recorded in July and August of last year in New York, *Soldier Of Midean* tears along at quite a pace, dominated throughout by the skittish basted, intensely layered, Middle Eastern polyrhythms that underscore the album's geopolitical themes (see *The Wire* 216). This may be what usually gets labelled as 'World Music', but it's facets' controlled energy more often recalls the relentless adrenaline rush of a Jeff Mills DJ set.

Zarb, bendir, darb, darbuka, bells, castanets and flutes are all played by Meesai himself, with some Middle Eastern musicians supplying: darbuka riffs and other live elements. These components are then apparently electronically reassembled and processed through a raft of effects, although it's to Meesai's credit that the album doesn't feel remixed like a studio project. Many tracks revolve around simple four-bar melodic phrases, which gather momentum through repetition and subtle variation. Dub bass enters the mix at several points, but it's largely subordinated to a jaggedum of polyrhythms which rattle, stike, squirm and pound along – more often than not in a frenetic whirling dervish waltz time rather than the metronomic 4/4 pulse of most Western dance music.

"Moving Still" resembles an aerial snapshot of the chaos of drummers, bubs, cars and wayward pedestrians that is the *Qemas el-Fira* in Marrakech at rush hour: "Stampede" clangs along like some medieval steam train, bashing out a groove that whizzes along with all manner of grit and distortion intact, and some fairly low-level frequencies. "Dance Of The Old Massa (A Festival Of Koun)" weaves a soft, dubby baseline with a percussive undercurrent that raps along at the speed of handstep (and probably wouldn't sound incongruous in the mix with, say, an Ed Rush track). Towards the end of the album, "Final Warning" serves up the most sustained trance beat of all, steadily piling up the tension to breaking point.

ANDREW BARKER & DANIEL CARTER DUO COMMON SOLDIER

CD/CD+DVD LP

BY DAVID KEENAN

For more than three decades now, multi-realist Daniel Carter has been connecting the dots between various high energy disciplines, chasing the line through groups like guitarra jazzes Test and Willem Parker's Other Orchestras In Music, and stepping outside for collaborations with members of Yo La Tengo and the No-Neck Blue Band. Very much a team player, it's rare to catch him naked as here, where he's situated against Andrew Barker's thunderous drum kit. Barker, who's also in The Gold Sprinkle Band and Parker's Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra, has stayed close with Carter over the years.

Common Soldier is as insanely limned pressing

from the same Italian label that's been reissuing Makoto Kawauchi's early solo works. Taking up side one, "Common Soldier I" is a 21 minute face-off with Carter switching between tenor and alto sax. Although the duo take a while to heat up, ten minutes in, the degree of non-linear movement is choice. Making like Teey Williams' *Out To Latch*, Barker fills infinitesimally small gaps with deictic counter-rhythms, while Carter plays up and over the top with odd, lightning zigzags and sweet, honedby ones. "Common Soldier II" is even better, as Carter's bawling melodies alternate with Barker's splashy cymbal work before he dives headfirst into the bowels of the kit for some tough rhythmic shouting. They hit the home straight with a throat-grinding, wet-fisted Carter and some swooping, bold runs, accelerating with every pass and forcing Barker to give a few more stops, before the reddest drops to a cumbia "Get From Ipaensis" tempo. Side two ends with "Common Soldier 3", a slowly extended, meditative duet between tuba and banjo that's the redone and re-uwash, with the tonal and tubby drums sounding great throughout, and you can follow Carter round the room with your ears as he dances restlessly from speaker to speaker.

LUCIANO BERIO

VOCI
ECM 17254/17261 CD
BY TOM PERCHARD

In 1964, the violinist and musicologist Aldo Bennici introduced Berio to some field recordings of music from Bennici's native Sicily. The composer's response was *Voci*, a 30 minute piece for violin and orchestra that works madly down from several of those songs. A year later, Berio reworks the piece for a dance company, reorchestrating the violin part and replacing the orchestra with a single percussionist. That piece, *Naturale*, is also heard on this CD, and is separated from its progenitor by six of the field recordings themselves.

Voci is subtitled "Folk Songs II", after a piece written 20 years earlier for the soprano and Berio's then wife Cathy Berberian. Vec's citation of the original folk melodies is less literal than in the earlier piece, though. Instead, Berio treats the transcribed material as a compositional point of departure rather than finished music. The violin soloist on this recording is ECM regular Jim Kashchian. Transformed into Berio's "singer", she has much of the song material to herself, splicing out long lines of collected melody against the orchestra's rich, surprisingly Began backdrop. As a piece very much in the concertos tradition, there's a certain amount of struggle between soloist and orchestra – The Radio Symphony orchestra when, under Dennis Russell Davies – which is extended to an uneasy dialogue between 'folk' and 'art' music.

Never one for an easy synthesis of his materials, Berio tests such tensions as a source of dramatic strength rather than constructional weakness. However, fitting between fragments of song, the piece's rather episodic quality results in an uncharacteristic lack of dynamism and impetus. Certainly Kashchian does her best, engaging with the music as a dynamic, actuary fashion. But she's undermined by the rather bald cultivation of Davies's orchestra, which sounds as indolent as it does opaque.

Made in the 1960s and 60s, the accompanying field recordings are hoarse and

gritty, a long way from the Italian vocal tradition as we might think of it. The recording of a male singer from Palermo featured in *Naturale* forms an occasional but powerful presence in Kashchian's 20 minute duet with percussionalist Robyn Schulkowsky. Here, the roles of voice are reversed: the vocal fights against the recorded folk music, only really breaking into song in the singer's absence.

THE BOHMAN BROTHERS

A TWIST FOR ALL POCKETS

RD88811/R8882 CD

BY JULIAN CONWAY

Adam Bohman, who also surfaces as a member of Morphogenesis and The London Improvisers Orchestra, here plays prepared violin, homemade strings, banjos, objects, mallets and tape. Brother Jonathan plays percussions, strings, rods, cones, feedback pads, oscillators, hosapec and sunsets. The instrumentation tells a substantial part of the story. The Bohmans' music involves improvisation that owes no debt to jazz. Musique concrète or Cage's *Composition* are more likely to spring to mind (a corollary of that are allusions to everyday objects and activities imbedded in the flux of sound. Deliriously non-musical (in the narrow sense), *A Twist For All Pockets* does without those obligatory cues supplied by familiar techniques, forms and progressions.

These are clearly 'composed' pieces, in accordance with the terms of a performance or as a consequence of subsequent editing or conformance, but they give off a strong sense of being confronted with the raw data, without assistance from map, watch or compass. There's lots of scraping, squeaking, thuds and clangings; small sounds amplified, distorted, often frenetic activity compressed, tightly packed. Some passages are transferred straight from live playing. Despite the studio manipulation of instruments elsewhere, the results fit into the same worldview. There's no sense of the duet as a duet; both brothers feed the continuum. The process, once underway, has to be followed through. It's like witnessing some improbable industrial process whose significance never becomes entirely clear. Gertrude Stein, a writer deeply interested in cues to recognition and the excitement of doing them, wrote in her story "Melancholia" of the fascination of a railroad yard, and how a child loves all the noise without fully understanding why it occurs. If you're suitably receptive, there's something of that appeal of "mystery and movement" to the Bohman Brothers' acute acoustics amongst everyday objects and surfaces.

BITTER SUGAR – THE ARKESTA CHAMBER THAT DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU KNOW

TRILOGY PROMO 3XCD

BY PETER SHARRO

These CDs of *Preg sul druh* "Bitter sugar" noodling is not exactly a description to get the heart beating and the palms sweating, but that's exactly what this magnificus opus from *Journalista*/Black Rock furnishes. Greg Tate's chamber arkestra is, and despite the visages of (burnt) sugar plum fairies dancing in your head, it's actually pretty good, at parts mindblowing. Of course it's too long; or course it needs its *Teo Nacero* to chop it down, of course it's burdened

by too much reference (even though Tate should know better, too often Burn Sugar reaches for the sound of Funkadelic, Miles, Sun Ra rather than the process). But, of course, it's intelligent, cerebral, spiritual and allows a textual awareness altogether missing from way too much black music right now – I love Tarraband and *Organized Noise* as much as the next person, but there's only so much deformed plasma screen R&B ping-pong a guy can take.

It starts with Volume One, *The Simes Return*, 74 minutes of the Star Wars canana band with allos playing lounge music in a veranda designed by Yves Tanguy. Fractured live drum 'Sun' bass gives way to cocktail jazz gives way to foxtrot. Eastern European cellos and piano nocturne gives way to post-Haiku post-Hendrix. And that's just the first track. Then the yestermon lunascapes come into view before more moogy-branded guitars frizzle and frizzle, over which a pretty limp MC with a pure Brooklyn accent claims he's from Liguria. Two living Colour/Family Stand feedback solo dinges bring things back to earth before a 22 minute version of "Castas Made Of Sand" goes off in search of Donny Hathaway.

Volume Two, *The Crepusculturum* is much less hit but no less schizophrenic. "Lunch With Alphon" shifts between Carlos Santana jamming at Crown to *Two Steps* skipping through a glock, while the following "King Bit My Hand" has a psyche episode where the group imitates the twin guitar godup of those Irish-Cockneys Molly Hatchet. The expected *PoMo* black boho effectio vibe then takes over with more chamber Jungle and a fabulous, Hissie-ratty version of Curtis Mayfield's "It's Alright, A Hell Below".

One three, *Fracturate Since Antiquity*, though, is where Tate's grand synthesis really takes off and becomes more than the sum of its parts. The opening track, "Fracturate Since Antiquity Part One", is simply extraordinary. Where much of the preceding 120 minutes feels like a connect-the-dots jumble, here the dubby, spacey brand is seamless, the references laconic and the black to the future's sonig a tag to many around rather than a crude, warty crutch. "Fracturate Since Antiquity Part Two" aims to do for House what *Curtis's Boss* did for Miami Bass and just about succeeds, even "Part Three" shows that all you need for a crushing groove is relentless forward motion not relentless guitars.

With the NME/DJ D project maybe seeing the light of day, Mos Def's Black Jack Johnson (a supergroup with Doug Wimbish) set to release an album and this three hour epic, maybe this is the year Black Rock makes its long promised breakthrough. More likely, though, it'll be shortened media hype to camouflage the gulf lurking behind those ten page features on *Hip-Hop rock schmucks like Limp Bizkit and Kid Rock*. And if you've been here before and *That Depends On What You Know* sounds like the same of, some of, just remember that it was the who first articulated and crystallised this particular aesthetic gianas.

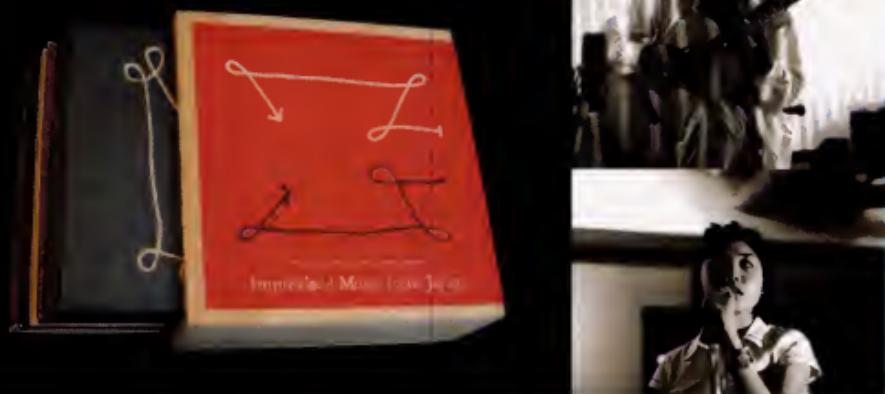
CHICKS ON SPEED/ KREIDER

THE CHICKS ON SPEED/
KREIDER SESSION

CHICKS ON SPEED COCH394/1919

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Box of Inaka: Ten CDs encased in pavilion wood. Kazuo Imai; Ats Yoshihide

VARIOUS IMPROVISED MUSIC FROM JAPAN IMPROVISED MUSIC FROM JAPAN (M6 10CD)

Hunched over his guitar in Off Limit, a compact art space in the Tokyo neighbourhood of Yoyogi, Taku Sugimoto is listening hard for the right moment to add another noise to his parsimony of coaxed taps, clunks and featherweight sighs. Forced to acclimate itself to the near inaudibility of Sugimoto's performance, the ear brings into focus the exterior sound picture framed by the lengthening gaps between events: the surprising stillness of the Tokyo night outside, offset by the hum of a helicopter receding into the distance. But when a clacking woodblock rhythm slowly circles the building, no one knows whether it's part of the performance or not. Turns out it's the local fire warden, warning the neighbourhood to turn off their heaters before going to bed.

It's an extraordinary performance where nothing really happens, yet you walk away with some memorable sonic images of a still Tokyo night and the fire warden clacking out his warning just the same as he did 100 years ago. Best of all is how Sugimoto's performance leaves you hearing things differently. That experience carries over to this terrific 10 CD survey of improvised music from Japan. The set's five double CDs in cardboard gatefold sleeves are housed in a handsomely designed box made from light yet durable pavilion wood – just like the chests Japanese women traditionally use to keep their finest kimonos in, because its resin repels moths. Some of the most attractive music inside similarly retools tradition for contemporary use. Improvised Music From Japan is breathtaking in its scope, ranging from the Tsugaru shamisen improvisations of Michihiko Sato to the SO-Mac pileup of Yasuhiro Otani. In between it takes in the several silences of Taku Sugimoto, Sachiko M

and Toshimaru Nakamura, the full-on noise of Osaka veterans Incapacitants, Ground-Zero (here pared down to Otomo Yoshihide and Boredoms vocalist Yamatsuka Eye) and Atsuhiko Ito; the free jazz of Masahiko Okura's Gnu and drummer Shoji Hano (with reeds players Peter Brötzmann and the late Werner Löd); and digital scrabblers, DJ and sampler artists like Tetuzi Akiyama, Susi and Otomo again. The set includes some remarkable women – namely Phew (as half of skewed sampler duo Big Picture); Haco, whose tirelessly cheerful invention either makes her Alvin Lucier's long lost daughter or a the children's TV host of your worst nightmare; and the astonishing vocalist Ami Yoshida, whose evocative yet self-effacing description of her electronically modulated vocal track "Hooooooon" – "The sound that came out was like the sound of a donkey trying to clear its throat" – does scant justice to the way the electronics help her dredge up an unsettling shamanic voice encrusted with the filth of ages.

Meanwhile, the presence of Kazuo Imai is the box's connection to two of Japan's most exemplary figures. Imai studied with the late guitarist Masayuki Takayanagi and Taj Mahal Travellers' Takehisa Kosugi. His three contributions, including one for the large improv ensemble Marginal Consort, reveal that Kosugi's lessons, especially, weren't wasted. The Consort piece is a diverting Can-can-like Zenfuzz of sounds squeezed from unimusic materials. The use of non-musical elements is the improvisor's fail-safe way of constantly returning him/her herself to a primitive state wherein the act of creation is charged with wonder. That feeling of awe permeates a remarkable solo piece, which soundwise barely raises itself from the ground as Imai effects a Creative ritual using a stone board, steel ball, bamboo blocks, shells and so on. The resulting, stoneground sounds conjure an image of a tiny human figure at the foot of a mountain. Its primitive longings are also found in the

postwar Japanese dance form of Butoh, while its naturalist leanings have their parallel in the Japanese aesthetic tradition of using 'borrowed scenery' (the way a traditional Japanese garden would incorporate the view of the mountain behind it, for instance). Except none of the sounds is borrowed, they're all Imai's work.

Glibly drawing parallels with traditional Japanese aesthetics or indeed making any general remarks about 'Japaneseness' must be deeply annoying for Japanese artists, especially for the improvisers here, many of whom operate at an international level. However, the 'borrowed scenery' analogy feels right for Yumiko Tanaka's insatiable, lovely five-part *gideyu* shamisen improvisation "Music For A Four-And-A-Half-Tatami-Mat Room", captured in a home recording hopefully coloured by extraneous domestic noises.

Though the set modestly claims to represent only a small section of Japanese improvised music, its contributors form a large enough cross-section to identify some of the issues that exercise it most. The most significant is a desire to erase memory from music and start anew. It's directly signalled in the titles of percussionist Yoshiimitsu Ichiraku's "Method For The Fourth Note, Which Is Not Actually Played" – essentially an electronic mocculation of sustained cymbal tones – and Kuzuhisa Uchiguchi's "Invisible Guitar". It also runs through Kazuo Imai's aforementioned primitivism, Sachiko M's 'sampler without memory' sinewave oscillations, Toshimaru Nakamura's no-input moog desk inventions, whose combination of weird tonalities and invertebrate motion are strangely reassuring if they catch you right, and Boredoms guitarist Seiichi Yamamoto's "Lost Appetite For Wanton Guitar Noise". Ironically, given his pioneering of turntable without cartridges and sampler without memory, Otomo Yoshihide signals he's ready to let the past roar back in with his vibrant blues guitar improvisation "Soundtrack, The Blue Kite". □

with some of electronica's finest. Together, Kreidler's exuberance and the Chicks' delivery have strong overtones of the B-52s, and the first three tracks are original vocal and instrumental non-securer collages done in a fairly similar style. In "Frequent Ryer Lounge Song", the syncopation and vocals are exasperator friendly, using a stripped down palette of Spartan percussions and arrangement that demand a Thomas Bernhards House mix.

However, the EP's jewel is "Wheel The Wild Roses Grow", a cover of Nick Cave's duet with Kylie Minogue. The original's deeply romantic narrative has it that lasting beauty exists only in the truth of death. It required the complicity of both parties to find redemption and transcendence in the narrator's brutal ending. Told from a different angle, the Kreidler Chicks replace lascivious instrumentation with the muted irregularity of a kickdrum, atonal strage and the pitter-patter of death that soaks it in alienation. And they not only reverse the singing roles (though without altering the pronouns), they also present the voices to sound like speech patterns decoded from radio frequencies. Resonance is replaced by tragedy and pain, as glitches break up the poem's tenison and spectral voices try to hide in the far corners of the stereo spectrum. In the process they have found a new level of pathos in a Nick Cave song. A rare and exquisite accomplishment.

PHELIP CORNER/ ALISON KNOWLES/ GEORGE BRECHT

FLUXUS
WERGO WER83122 CD

BY LOUISE GRAY

"Nobody knows who and what Fluxus is," pronounced musician and composer George Brecht, one of the founders of the loose 1960s confederation of artists that was Fluxus, to the German radio station WDR in 1983. It's not such a stretch, after all, Fluxus did take its ethos from a post-Cageian idea of framing. If it had been the elder composer's genius to suggest that silence was as much a part of music as the sound itself, it was Fluxus who picked up Cage's Zen inclination and effectively animated the picture. In short, Fluxus was a process. A collection of angular radio plays constructed for WDR in the College student's studio of acoustic art in the early 60s, the three musicians who appear here, were (whatever their tools Brecht might lay) intimately associated with Fluxus and this CD underlines the

quiescent dynamism of the movement.

Brecht's half-hour *The Han Han Ming* Of *Seng Ts'an* is the dominant work, in length at least. Taking as its basis a multi-layered reading from the Zen Buddhist text, Brecht inserts pauses – their positions determined by aleatoric operations – in the recording. The voices ebb and flow, gently washing over one another, as the text is passed between them. Sleavenotes suggest that the piece's form could be compared to the canon, a pleasing enough suggestion, though in reality the sound of dripping water is the work's organising principle. Alison Knowles's *Seam Sequences* is similarly voice-oriented. Punctuated by the periodic shuffle of beans across a surface, a female voice delivers bean-related proverbs and stories, its male counterpart describes the chemical properties of the legume family. Whether Knowles is making an implicit gender statement here is unclear, but she is, she says, still with her ground, laying the vines into an uneasy union.

Felix Corner's *Sate's Rose Cross As A Revelation* is a delicate development of two chords from Sate. A slowly weight piece for sans and voice, almost punctuated in its approach, Corner's intention is as spectral as Cage's. "Do not be irritated," he recites slowly at one point (all the texts are read from slips of paper pulled randomly from a hat) and there's no way that one can be. Apparently recorded late in the night, the piece achieves an intimacy between artist and listener, studio and technology on a par with the best nocturnal radio works.

ELTON DEAN & MARK HEWINS BAR TORQUE

MOONLUNG MUR001 CD

BY JULIAN COONEY

Saxophonist Elton Dean and guitarist Mark Hewins seem playing together 20 years ago in the group Soft Heat, so they know each other's playing intimately by the time this November 1992 set was recorded live at London's Jazz Cafe. Inspired by Hewins, there's little to suggest its concert origins. Dean's unmistakable alto saxophone and sawtooth are usually heard in energetic contexts that elicit from him an almost acrobatic decisiveness. On this occasion Hewins spring a surprise, wielding a synth guitar which, coupled with techniques of rubbing and tapping his instrument, enabled him to furnish a hot, at times laعنر harmonic base.

Hewins admits that his harmonic technique

was inspired by a rogue gesture made by Ninkir conveyor and Brixton wildcat Hugh Metcalfe. An object lesson in the obliqueness of "influence": Hewins's lush textures couldn't appear more remote from Metcalfe's determined maddenedness. The synth guitar, complete with bridging samples, creates an environment laden with artifice, but the gamble paid off. Dean pursues his lyrical inclinations to the verge of contemplative blowing. It's a side of his musical character that has received too little exposure and lovely moments occur regularly throughout the three pieces.

As with John Surman's work with electronics, the results are best judged in terms of new contexts offered to the saxophonist. That may sound gudging towards Hewins, but it actually acknowledges his vital role in this duo, enabling Dean to be heard stretching out, chasing the harmonies refreshingly and at length.

VLADISLAV DELAY

NAIMA

STAUGOLD 29 CD

BY BEN BIRTHWICK

At All Electronics 2001 in Linz, Austria, Herlin's Vladislav Delay took up a five day residency as the 30,000 square metre Meierei's sound designer, creating an "improvisational soundshed" which his many allies set about researching: two concerts (as Vladislav Delay and Luoma) and a site-specific sound design later, Naima is the 42 minute "legroom of his work there. The cover art is a series of photographs of a woman in highly sculpted clothing taken from oblique angles. Shapes are accentuated and the fabric overlaid with digitally manipulated planes. As a metaphor for the music it works well: Delay's surfaces are usually pliable and textured (and like these images, exquisitely delicate), but this project delves deep into structure. Both images and soundscapes have a strong architectural theme. Deconstructing narrative space, Delay exposes each element and releases it from its original role, with the result that it is, yet is no longer, simultaneously structure and ornament.

The imprints of Delay's various aliases are clear, even as they combine and switch roles with each other. This produces an instability at the core of the collaboration between his different guises. On first listen this was inevitably irritating because it refused to comply with listener expectations, but it has since become one of the most fascinating aspects of the

project; Vladislav Delay's driving Techno-dub, Luoma's more abstract soundscapes and Luoma's yearning vocals and melodies all untangle each other and fragment aesthetic resolution. Shimmering synth washes are interrupted by a koto/drum's occasional threats to develop a rhythm. Stuttering ticks and ticks edits, Guitrend's spoken word reflections upon art, music and creative production, cutting up the elliptical poem/text in the sleeve notes with lyrics from Luoma's Vocalogy tracks. Electronics and vocals loop back on themselves in a halucinatory drift of non-linear thought, tone and narrative in an extraordinary piece of music from one of the most constantly creative artists working today.

ARTHUR DOYLE ELECTRO- ACOUSTIC ENSEMBLE PLAYS THE AFRICAN LOVE CALL

ECSTASY YOD ECR001/PRCD LP

BY DAVID WARBURTON

The concept of 'American Primitive' could have been invented with Arthur Doyle in mind, as well as his Electro-Acoustic Ensemble, featuring update New York improvisers John Scherer, R. Nease, with Dave Cross and Tim Poland from the group Coffee, and Ed Wilcox from Philadelphia-based Temple Of Bon Mot. With typical disregard for the mundane niceties of studio recording, Doyle apparently asked for Nease's digital recording of a June 1999 gig at the Bug Jar in Rochester, New York to be transferred to poor quality cassette for this LP's first side. Side two was recorded in spectacular lo-fi at the Astrocade in Philadelphia three months later. According to producer Brian Coley, the tape "sounded like it had been recorded on shoe leather", and was so out of phase it was dispatched to Sonic Youth's studio in New York for eight hours "burn reasenassment" by Jim O'Rourke. Even so, the album still has what Coley describes as a "deep mud vibe".

"Omo" refers to "the late, great Omo Bob", though on his two albums on Zugzwang, A Prayer For Peace (recorded just ten days after the Rochester set featured here), as well as on the forthcoming Basement Tapes album, the track is called "Home". Doyle enthusiasts will also immediately realise that the track entitled "Gig Dey Lady" is in fact "Noah Black Ark", though Dave Cross claims the leader provided the titles as they appear here. As Coley writes, "It's never easy to figure out what the hell Arthur is up to." Only too true: musicians playing with him are

Chapter Twelve: in which Dr Jim buys an ad to generate interest in these antipodean avatars of the avantgarde...



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BARBARA ESS & PEGGY AHWESH

RADIO GUITAR

ECSTATIC PEACE \$49.95 CD

Radio Guitar is another release in Ecstatic Peace's informal series presenting the work of female artists experimenting in sound. Like Jess Holzworth and Jutta Koether of The Outer Sound Project (see *The Wire* 234), Peggy Ahwesh and Barbara Ess are better known for their work in visual media, though Ess also has strong links with New York's No Wave.

But to say 'experiment' is somewhat misleading. Radio Guitar is a triumph, not a tentative venture. Constructed, as the title suggests, from 'radio sound and electric guitar', the nine numbered – rather than named – tracks sound like field recordings. They crackle and hiss. They sound ancient even as they sound alive, yet theirs is not the sound of a bygone era – the old weird America – or a distant cultural enclave. It's the sound of another dimension, neither ancient nor modern, a sound with exceptional extrasensory depth.

To put it another way: if you were a fly, track eight would sound like Kafka's *Metamorphosis* as read by Edmund Kean. There is, of course, no such recording. Well, not in this life, but perhaps in a parallel universe... Radio Guitar encodes such trans of thought, its faux documentary effect is, of course, the result of painstaking collage. Location recordings are overlaid with found sound and lost memories, filtered through six degrees of separation, screened with random ambience, cut up, looped and layered, and bounced off an abandoned satellite. What's remarkable is not so much the method as its net effect, which is electric. For all their technical wizardry, these recordings still feel authentic, as if you're overhearing events in real time. Listening to them is like eavesdropping on ghosts.

It's an astonishing experience. The tracks have a tense presence, a nervous energy that strikes off abruptly at tangents in response to some alien whim.

But, if the logic they follow is inscrutable, it is also compelling. Beneath the chameleon surface, there is another music. A glacial undertow stirs all sorts of unbidden emotion. Inspiring queer visions while defying analysis. Just as a radio tuned between stations raises otherworldly awareness, so Radio Guitar disrupts perceptual convention by installing something quite mysterious in its place.

Both Ahwesh and Ess teach at Bard College in the upper Hudson Valley, New York. Originally from Pittsburgh, Ahwesh is an accomplished experimental film maker, having started out with Super 8 in her teens. She now works in a number of formats, mixing obsolete technologies and digital video to create distinctive hybrid films that challenge cinematic conventions. In *The Puppet*, for instance, she adds her own voiceover to game-playing footage of Lara Croft. Barbara Ess is a lifetime New Yorker and a graduate of late 1970s No Wave exemplars, *The Static*. She was an early associate of Glenn Branca, playing in his Ensemble and collaborating on the mixed media zine, *Just Another Asshole*. She also played ukulele in Y Pants, three female pranksters intent on making real mischief with hugely amplified toy instruments. For the last ten years, she has been performing with another female trio, Ultra Vulva. Ess is also a distinguished photographer and has just published an impressive monograph, *I Am Not This Body* (Aperture HK\$40). Her photographs show the same interest in alternative realities as the *musique concrète* of Radio Guitar.

For the past 20 years, Ess has worked mainly with pinhole cameras, awkward, galumphing contraptions from the dawn of photographic time. She turns their crude optics to her advantage: the long, lensless exposures capture hazy scenes with luminous intensity. The short focal lengths feather and distort the images, emphasising surreal elements. She times her shots carefully, usually in muted duotones, to enhance the clairvoyant effect. Particularly revealing, when considered alongside the luminous wonder of

her music, is the self-portrait gracing the book's cover. Ess hovers at the pinhole's periphery, caught between a sunlit meadow and the swirling circumambient gloom, like Alice peering into the White Rabbit's hole. But her face, wary and uncertain, is already dissolving, merging with shadow, plunging into the unknown. It's a curious portrait that absents its subject. But Ess absolutely insists she won't be pinned down. Light is evanescent. Personality changes. She wants to show what cannot be seen.

Ess clearly has uncommon instincts. She finds signs of emanence everywhere – at home, on the beach or the street, in the wild – and invests the simplest scenes with an air of mystery: above a mountain lake cradled in shadow, long white legs scoop at the huddled sky; a dove appears plumb in front of the camera, a sudden flurry of lilac and mauve; a snake slithers across suburban shagpile toward a blazing hearth. In these vivid instances, the symbols, be they never so hoary, sing.

It's a thrilling vision – not because it glorifies the familiar, but because it animates the unknown. Michael Cunningham, author of *The Hours*, who, with Thurston Moore and Guy Armstrong, contributes tests to her monograph, says Ess belongs to "a curious breed: the ones determined to understand more than the visible, the ones fearless enough to believe that the world is made up not only of more than we can see, but of more than we might want to imagine." She is, he concludes, plotting "an astronomy of the invisible".

He might say much the same of her collaboration with Ahwesh. Radio Guitar sifts through some delirious for signs of life and stumbles on another dimension. It may be a house of the spirits or a tower of Babel in some far insect realm. It doesn't matter. What makes this record remarkable – moving, even – is its fresh sense of absence, its longing for meaning and the ingenuity with which that longing is expressed. Not a word of explanation. Not one single hint. The imagination is invisible. □

No Wave guitarists Barbara Ess (left) and her no less photography (right), both taken from her book *I Am Not This Body* (Aperture Press)

**Bleddyn Butcher
tunes into the lost
dimensions
explored by a No
Wave photographer
and film maker
adrift in music**



faced with three options: either follow him into the tiny, cellular structures that make up his "compositions" (as Sunny Murray did on 2000's *Down In A New Vibrato*); go with the flow into a veritable, yes/no free for all (as the late "Money" being a fine example); or sit back and let him wail. On "Dry Dozy Lady", the drummer is content to lay down a funeral New Orleans 4/4 swing and leave Doyle to do the business. Either through the source tape's variability or D'Rooster's intervention, "DCC" ends up multitracking Doyle to produce a fearful megamix: one Doyle is wild enough, more of him is deeply unsettling. And that's precisely the point: everything about the work, from the pieces themselves to the recording to the track listing and sleeve notes, is designed to deliver the listener a severe shock, questioning the very nature of what jazz is, was or should be. The answer to is simply let yourself be carried away. The package is completed with the inclusion of a bumper sticker, "Honk If You Love The Arthur Doyle Acoustic-Electric Ensemble".

HAMID DRAKE & ASSIF TSAHAR SOUL BODIES VOL. 1

AYLER AYLC424 CD
BY TOM PERCHARD

This live recording was made at New York City's Vortex Festival, the series co-founded several years ago by Israeli-born reed player Assif Tsahar. Still in his early thirties, Tsahar has played with William Parker, Steve Lacy and Rashied Ali, among others, while Hamid Drake is a highly in demand drummer in avant circles.

Three long pieces make up the recording. For the first few minutes, Tsahar's uncompromising tenor sax peeks at Evan Parker's bulging circular figures, but these are quickly subsumed under a more dominant late Coltrane influence, which, for the rest of the performance, the saxophonist struggles to assimilate. Tsahar is a long way from arriving at any really personal approach, and it sounds like partner Drake's integral identity only makes him more uncomfortable. Drake's mastery is complete, and sometimes he can't help but swallow up Tsahar. Bursting into the first track with a New Orleans groove as powerful as it is unexpected, the drummer commands the proceedings, throwing rhythm to the saxophonist from second to second and moulding the long-term progression of each piece.

Drake may find himself identified as a 'tree'

player of some sort, but the grooves he likes to set up are as "in the pocket" as you like. Fees jazz may have always looked backwards as well as forwards — many players of the 1980s saw the return to collective improvisation as an evocation of early jazz practice — but when the music once borrowed techniques, new players like Drake borrow styles. The drummer's "freedom" might lie in his ability to explicitly condensate his own music making, rather than in any narrow technical or stylistic approach. Tsahar's freedom too: while Drake's tome drum and muzzen calls reach across to the Middle East in "Dry Dances", so the Middle Eastern's bass clatters heads back to black America.

DREXCIYA HARNESSED THE STORM

TRESOR 1811 CD

TRANSILLUSION THE OPENING OF THE CEREBRAL GATE

SUPREMATIC 03 CD
BY KEN HOLLOWAY

So determined have Drexciya been to surround themselves with mystery that this two-man experimental noise crew from Detroit really does appear to inhabit a far denser medium than the rest of humanity. Fortunately retaining their anonymity, they rarely grant interviews; expressing their perceptions through a complex aquatic mythology, they equate underwater existence with the direct communication of purpose. At times murky, unpredictable, unsettling and hostile, a sense of conviction runs through their work that if radical thought is to survive in today's refined intellectual atmosphere, it must continually rediscover itself.

Reducing the Drexciya myth to its most twisted elemental components, *Harnessed The Storm* is a series of banished and strenuous abstractions derived from the monstrous ebb and flow of natural forces at their most extreme. Even the warped syntax of the title suggests some fundamental upheaval, whose reverberations can be felt throughout the album's opening track, "Under Sea Disturbances", in which powerful rhythmic subsidence and fluctuating keyboards are held together in delicate balance. The direct, soughing theme of "Digital Traum", released last year as a 12", is similarly counterbalanced by the deep tonson on such tracks as "Dr Brown's Black Storm Stabilizing Spheres" and "The Pavilion Organization", in which sounds have been squashed and compressed into strange

unearthly shapes. Stripped of the stodgy comic book rhetoric and action figure graphics that threatened to subsume their 1999 *Resonar, Neptune's Law*, this is a far more rigorous and challenging proposition, with mixes that run long and deep, rippling with the faintest play of shadows on light as observed from the ocean floor. If there's a back story to all this, Drexciya are way too subtle to give it up.

This understated confidence is echoed in *Transillusion: The Opening Of The Cerebral Gate*, a side project produced by one half of Drexciya as a Dimensional Wave transmission in which contorted slivers of glistening Detroit techno-pop offer glimpses into a world where minds are tweaked into new levels of consciousness. The sharply metallic pulses nosebleeding through "Negative Faz" and "Cerebral Cortex Malfunction" hint at the dark illuminations to be found in complete mental breakdown, while the dizzied rhythms of "Cubans in Guyana" and "War Of The Cities" are allowed to speak for themselves. At once any and chilling, light but brittle, *Transillusion* offers further proof that although the foundations of Detroit techno may be deeply submerged, its highest structures reach towards the sky.

ARNOLD DREYBLATT THE ADDING MACHINE

CANTALOUPE MUSIC CAS1006 CD

BY TOM PERCHARD

Arnold Dreyblatt's *Dielectric Of Excited Strings* has existed in various forms since 1979. The line-up heard on this recording, has several players drafted in from The Bang On A Can All-Stars. The only explanatory text Dreyblatt offers for his five pieces is a quotation from an 1887 adding machine patent: "At the completion of the tenth step of the wheel, it reads, 'the wheel of the next higher order will be caused to advance one step.' Well, that loosely fits the procedure Dreyblatt's music follows: harmonically rooted and rhythmically repetitive blocks of music are divided into several layers, and as each block is succeeded, these layers reformat themselves slightly, until, by accumulation, a larger change of some sort is reached.

If the process sounds like it might be interesting to listen to, it isn't. Dreyblatt doesn't let his constructive ideas out until, and the music sounds like it's been manufactured into form rather than set in motion and left to take over. He probably wasn't aiming for such an unfolding — the ensemble's rmashacke collection of double

basses, guitars, hand-gurdy and cimbalum deliberately counters any mechanistic feel — but the alternative feels like a compromise.

The album is bookended by International Dalsinis and Meantime, complementary pieces that overlay paradise ground percussions with saged Morse code rhythms. The rolling style Dreyblatt requests from his drummer makes some of it sound like singeing glam-pop, and there's a wonky instance of 70s rock double-time, too. The best piece is also the least motoric: in the three minute *House Of Flung*, the sound is sparse and minimalist, but the toe of bass, percussion and a special trout thumbball zither quickly work up an ecstatic frenzy.

EKKERHEAD EHRLERS & JOSEPH SUSHY/LIAM GILLICK WHITE CUBE JAZZ

BOTTRUP-BOY ENDF001 12"

HEIMIR BJÖRGÜLFÖSSON/ OLAFUR ELIASSON THERMOCROMIC ISLAND

BOTTRUP-BOY ENDF002 12"

STEPHAN MATHIEU/ TOBIAS REHBERGER LES MALLAISES DE LA BEAUTÉE

BOTTRUP-BOY ENDF003 12"

BY PHILIP SHERIFFS

EN/DF is a new series curated by Bottrup-Boy's Robert Meijer, designed to link contemporary visual art with new experimental music in specially commissioned sets of artworks and recordings pressed in editions of 100. The series launches with Ekkerd Ehrlers and Joseph Sushy's *White Cube Jazz* and Liam Gillick's artwork *"A Day With No Sun Is Night"*. The latter's set of melted squares is like a user-inventive mind's of his solar-panel sculptures.

Sushy and Ehrlers, meanwhile, offer a warm and fuzzy set of guitar Improv and digital gurglings. The biggest surprise is how traditional the first track sounds, almost like a meandering update of Helgi Vito-Lobos. In context, it's considerably more radical than the sneaky and static wash that follows, although this is lovely as well.

The tightest pairing of the three, EN/DF002 brings together numerous short pieces by Heimir Björðulfsson with Danish artist Olafur Eliasson's *"Thermochromic Island"*, a silkscreen made with temperature-sensitive ink. From Icelandic group Stillupseyja, Björðulfsson augments his characteristic end-hiss with field recordings of water, while Eliasson's silkscreen pictures an island, surrounded by black water that

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Rose again: Sacher-Pelz's Maurizio Bianchi

SACHER-PELZ MUTATION FOR A CONTINUITY

ALGA MARCHÉ/N/MARCOUS MART01-004 4XCD

After five years of concocting some of industrial culture's most sinister electronic storms from 1979-1984, Milan-based Maurizio Bianchi simply stopped. All of his communications with labels, distributors and magazines, which he had littered with obtuse prophecies and apocalyptic rhetoric, also ceased. Rumours persisted that he had succumbed to unsanctioned complications from unknown physical deformities, or that he had joined an obscure monastic order. The latter was somewhat validated when he resurfaced in 1998 to release two wholly uninteresting Ambient records filled with gilded spiritual imagery. The self-proclaimed nihilist had, in fact, become a Jehovah's Witness.

Many of Bianchi's contemporaries who remain antagonistic towards Christian morality scoff at his conversion, casually dismissing him as a treacherous defector. Yet from Bianchi's perspective, his contributions to Industrial culture were more of an outward expression of an internal turmoil, where the seething aesthetic violence of his metaphors of genocide and malevolent cancers conflicted with a nascent Christian epistemology. He was probably a Christian when he was making the bulk of his music during that period, but chose to keep his beliefs shrouded in mystery.

Since Bianchi's return to the musical world, he has been resurrecting many of his earlier recordings, first with the ArchéoMB reissues of his suffocating, "proto and neurotic" electronics recorded under his best known moniker MB, and now with this box set from his first late 70s musical incarnation as Sacher-Pelz. Under this guise he produced four cassettes as Sacher-Pelz in limited quantities for his friends and the few proponents of experimental music

in his hometown. These recordings were self-described as *musique concrète*, but are clearly situated outside of the realm of academia and the institutionally driven music of Pierre Schaeffer or Pierre Henry. Instead, Bianchi had fused the most primitive application of *musique concrète* with the aesthetic principles of Throbbing Gristle's "entertainment through pain" and William Bennett's extremist Come/Whitehouse projects. While the MB recordings were distinctly electronic albums that took the sounds of Conrad Schnitzler and Klausur to oppressively aching ends, the Sacher-Pelz tapes paralleled the destroyed/recycled music found on Boyd Rice's *Black Album*.

With what appears to be a hombiset up of multiple tape machines, a turntable and a few simple electronic devices, Bianchi abused his vinyl collection of Kraftwerk, Neu!, Morricone soundtracks and unidentified disco tunes to arrive at a mutilated version of the originals through monotonous loops and vanspeed warble. What little references to *Autobahn* that could be heard had been disfigured and corroded as if the sounds themselves had been exhumed from a lengthy burr in a murky swamp.

The first Sacher-Pelz tape, *Canus*, found Bianchi enthralled by the technology of a vanspeed tape machine. This recording takes those post-mortem tones from his beaten Kraftwerk albums and twists them into a neurotic arrhythmic movement through erratically shifting, serial repetitions. *Venus and Cease To Exist* are similar in their asynchronous looping textures, but they show him experimenting with the vanspeed and an additional synthesizer that bleeds through the turgid noise. Even within these decidedly primitive recordings, he makes it very clear that he intends to pursue a monotony and dullness with his sound as an exorcism of his existential frustrations with life.

The final Sacher-Pelz recording, *Valours*, is the most advanced of the four, with his monotone loops moving

Maurizio Bianchi's late 70s Italian Industrial onslaughts were the prelude to an unexpected musical conversion. Jim Haynes seeks salvation in mutilation

between clarity and abstraction. Lifting samples from *Neul 2* was certainly an interesting choice, since that album already featured a number of Neul's vanspeed "remixes" of their own work. Nevertheless, these snippets have been contextualised as grizzled collages of smouldering noise and disjointed textures that swell in complexity to create a swirling crescendo of black energy.

At times, though, the Sacher-Pelz recordings are unwittingly comical. Jarring sonic manifestations of erratic vertigo and shadowy hallucinations emerge from within Bianchi's bingleton of damaged cultural references. Many of his collages have been sutured together Dr Frankenstein-style, with the clumsy aural stitching of the tape machine audibly starting and stopping. Occasionally such techniques re-emerged in the later MB recordings, only they were better hidden behind the dense walls of interlocking delay patterns and dive bombing electronic squalls. The Sacher-Pelz recordings lack the focused intensity that overwhelmed the final MB recordings such as *Carolinos* or *Endometrio*. Similarly, the MB recordings rippled with various Christian references – as in the dedication for *The Plain Truth* "to all the redeemed people" – which, in hindsight, indicate Bianchi's misanthropy was an inwardly directed form of asceticism. At that time, he was in effect actualising the Greek proverb found in Luke's Gospel, "kicking against the pricks", as the futile and self-destructive opposition to the will of God. Yet, Sacher-Pelz offers only a few clues that his work from 1979-84 would be a catalyst for his spiritual conversion. At this stage he was still citing the stereotypes of transgressive aesthetics found in the likes of De Sade, Manson and, of course, Leopold Von Sacher-Masoch. The Sacher-Pelz recordings stand as the opening chapters in a ghoulish aural diary that still have few parallels within contemporary culture. □

gets bleached by the heat of your fingertips. Metaphors of the frozen heart have often been applied to the region's artists; one wonders if these two finally just gave in and decided to address the topic outright.

EN/VOX/03 hopefully comprises a 12" vinyl recording of four tracks by Stefan Mathieu, and a signed and numbered 10" sleeve from Frankrik's Tobias Rehberger, whose whimsical design recalls Paul Klee. As with the others, no information is given as to how the artists and musicians came together. In Rehberger and Mathieu's case, the former's quirky illustrations don't necessarily suggest a visual interpretation of the latter's tattered sonic aurora, represented here in glistening droplets, drummed harp and backplate plato. But the perceptual gulf poses interesting questions regarding the history of musical illustration, which the next set panning Sarah Morris with Jan Jelinek, Henrik Håkansson with Alejandro & Aaron, and Angela Bulloch with TV Pow might well answer.

FIMA EPHRON

SOUL MACHINE

12ADK/T27153 CD

BY JOHN CRUCHLEY

Ephron's regular gigs include Hasidic New Wave and Genn Frunzyski's Headless Torsos, firmly rooting him in the NYC downtown scene. Another in Tzadik's Radical Jewish Culture series, and his first release as leader, *Soul Machine* combines traditional Jewish elements with jazz rock fusion: Mesada meets Weather Report.

Comprising Ephron on bass, Edward Simon on keyboards, Jim Black on drums, Dave Brinley on saxophone and clarinet, and Adam Rogers on guitar, his quintet pulls off this re-assembly with an equal measure of spiritual dignity and musical irreverence, and without a hint of compromise or sentimentality. They also blend in elements of traditional Jewish chant, giving it a resonance similar to An Caine's takes on Mahler.

The quintet sound is well balanced (David Torn, guesting on oud and songlines, was responsible for much of the mixing) and Jim Black is outstanding. His drumming is always surprising and often inspirational, driving this set with determined accuracy and verve. The ensemble's solos are few and concise, with due care exercised towards synergy and integration (John Zorn's own project, *The Gift*, has similar musical values and is a good point of reference).

The jazz rock fusion of "Dead Play Of Numbers", a track full of menace and heavy inevitability, is more darkly brooding than frenetic, yet the group are capable of delicacy to redress the balance. Dominated by a sombre gravitas, however, the overall tone of the album is mournful rather than celebratory.

MORTON FELDMAN

STRING QUARTET (II)

HAT (NOW) ART 4144 4XCD

BY PHIL ENGLAND

Recalling the time when The Kronos Quartet gave the world premiere in 1983 of String Quartet (II), the group's David Harrington remembered, "Even now when I'm thinking of the Second Quartet I have a shooting pain in my back." If the Ives Ensemble did not have the benefit of the late composer's direct guidance, the group did take advantage of the recording medium, where, presumably, they were able to record in chunks

their performance is unquestionably committed and a lapse of concentration is never apparent.

Feldman's compositionist method was about coaxing sounds, or waiting for them to spring up from the silence, feeling relationships and weighing their rightness. This disposition was beyond, and even antecedent to, notational description. Like many in his generation, he was wary of the classic, emotionally manipulative narrative arc which "comes us to exalted heights perhaps, but when it is over, we are exactly where we were before our journey" (A Compositional Problem, 1972). So while the overriding impression of his second string quartet is of unutterable beauty, it's the kind that helps confer a stillness, even a hint of existential gnosis, a more subtle and lasting sensibility, its truths revealed by patient observation.

The piece's length – at least four and a half hours it's most likely the longest written for string quartet – is crucial in achieving this effect. But the reasons he gave for writing longer pieces were much more down to earth: giving himself new challenges and new problems to solve. "Up to one hour you think about form, but after an hour and a half it's scale," he said. "Form is easy – just division of the thing into parts. But scale is another matter. You have to be in control of the piece – it requires a heightened kind of concentration. Before, my pieces were like octopuses; now, they're like evolving things."

Those who know Feldman from his piano works alone might be surprised by the flow of invention here: its twists and turns are endlessly fascinating and memory confounding. In his original notes for the piece, Feldman described his composition method as "assemblage" where "there is no continuity of fitting the parts together as words in a sentence or paragraph". The ideas come in short blocks but the blocks themselves are constantly moving internally, with Feldman frequently moving among the rhythmic intervals between notes. The effect is of an object slowly turning, causing the light to strike differently by degrees. Sometimes these components are obscured by pauses, giving the impression that the music's breathing as it ebbs and flows, progressing largely in a manner of unhammed dignity.

Feldman is playful with repetition and variation. He avoids schema and establishes patterns only to break them. Occasionally there are playful pizzicato passages or a couple of plucked notes that bridge a passage; a sequence of constantly changing chords, especially beautiful, melt into one another; the music will pulse with random or repeated chords regularly, then suddenly a short melodic line is repeated against a single held note. The mood of exalted, inebriate contemplation on one, occasionally turns abrasive or dissonant and, very rarely, harsh and staccato.

There are a couple of surreal moments when the quartet lightly pulse together to give the effect of a church organ or a gigantic piano accordion. Such moments serve to indicate how far Feldman had gone in realising his later goal of deinstrumentalising sound.

The most familiar element is a gently swelling, and receding chord. From its fullest point a tangential, separate note emerges that cuts out its source point. This two-part pulsing effect repeats with perhaps one element of the structure changing from one pulse to the next. Meanwhile, another phrase recurs in slightly

altered forms at intervals, as if marking the passage of time, in the same way one might come across a style every now and then along a winding path.

On the final few discs the drama, or rather the rate of invention, slows up. It's as if Feldman did not want to interfere with the onset of a liminal mindset – the advance into a walking dream state. The piece becomes less about inspiration, love and devotion and more about stillness.

THE FUJI

ANYWAY WHAT TIME DID YOU GET UP THIS MORNING

GRASSHOPPER GR005 CD

BY MIKE BARNER

The Fuji, or Fuji Shima, is a phenomenon. A former welder, he is now a peregrine busker, traveling the world, living largely on the proceeds of paintings of other busking musicians, whom he also records in a diary and, more recently, video footage. When improving trumpeter Paul Shereasht was 'discovered' busking in York seven years ago, he was shown, by way of introduction, a photo of his brotherstick atop the grave of Delta blues legend Mississippi Fred McDowell. He plays with bluesman Baby Gramp when in Seattle and, on his trips to England, he and Shereasht (also in Ya Basta, The One King Potts and Echo City) form a remarkable duo. This live set opens with a recording of one of the Fuji's own 'discoveries', an elderly busker playing the spoons outside Kentish Town Underground station in North London. What follows is some unique punctual blues, the Fuji is an adventurous bottleneck guitarist, playing Country blues in a way that also evokes Japanese iroko music. He sings almost exclusively in Japanese and when he descends from the warm, clear tones at the apex of his banjo register into guttural vowels, the language sounds custom-built for deep blues.

Shereasht provides sparse but telling accompaniment by way of fluttering trumpet lines, harmonica and homemade instruments, including pieces of tinned gas cans. On "Junky Blues", he introduces an extraordinary bellowing sound into what starts off sounding like a take on "Raining And Thunderin", while "A Shaka Crowing On A Dead Tree" sonically approximates its title. Questions of authenticity are redundant with music this faithful to the Delta blues spirit.

TETSUO FURUDATE

OTHELLO AS NOISE OPERA

LES DISQUES DU SOLEIL ET DE L'ACIER

DD404277 CD

BY STEPHEN ROBINSON

Emanuel Lewis once remarked that philosophy is a meditation on Shakespeare. A quick glance at the record's output of noise multi-instrumentalist Tetsuo Furudate suggests that for him music is a meditation, albeit a gnarled and twisted one, on philosophy and Shakespeare; his 1998 recording *World As Wit* (reference Schopenhauer) and his 1994 rendition of Macbeth (with Mezzrow and Russ' Basuya Yoshida) are just two indications of these twin obsessions. Never one to shirk the size of large-scale works driven by an ambition big enough to move Birnam Wood to Dunsinane, Furudate's latest excursion finds him with his group Autrement (Yo-Yo (named after Levinas's second major work) advancing once again into the world of

noise and Shakespeare: *Othello As Noise Opera*. But as Othello himself asks, "What noise is this?" A Prog rock excursion by other means? Pictures At An Exhibition for noise aficionados? Well, perhaps not.

Its hugely promising opening shot suggests that the noise work to follow will appropriate the text of Othello as it were just another texture in the mix. Starting from Act V, Scene 4, the rasping, metallic intensity of the savagely overdriven opening rises, "It is the cause, it is the cause", neatly scorching your way across your scalp like a scythe. But despite the vocal treatments, the ensuing fidelity to the text, which in itself rapidly establishes its own intransigent mete, somehow subordinates the noise to its own poetic rhythm. It's a curious inversion where the relative quiet of the voice establishes precedence over the surrounding barrage, dictating the tempos, pace and position of the music. Although it's always sonically expansive, the noise somehow becomes incidental. The brooding bass rumbling throughout sets an ominous tone, albeit in an orthodox fashion. And for all their obnoxiousness, the recurring shibboleth squats, tax fairfares and chime tonics, the latter faintly recalling Hermann Nitsch's mammoth *Holy Spail*, soon come to take a supporting role punctuating the set. With some minor modifications this could even be appropriated for a 'radical' theatre production. And even then you would have to ask just how radical it actually is. Not quite noise or opera, and lacking the unity of either, it somehow sits just this side of convincing.

LUTZ GLANDIEN

THE 5TH ELEPHANT

REIN 002 CD

BY JULIAN CONWAY

The new album by Berlin based composer and skilled electronics craftsman Lutz Gländien originated in studio improvisation sessions with former Henry Cow, Pere Ubu and Cassiber drummer Chris Cutler and The Berlin Symphony Orchestra's tuba player Michael Vogt. Dissatisfied with the results, Gländien shelved the tapes. Later he revisited them and found nuggets that need out for refinement. Over a few years he kept returning to the raw material, eventually reconstructing it as this powerful set of "virtuolelectric stones". Each of these 12 pieces was launched from a sample lifted from the abored recordings and was evolved primarily from recorded sources: percussive riffs, tuba motifs, snippets of MIDI guitar, studio ambience isolated and processed by means of Gländien's computer, and discreetly enhanced and embellished with extraneous materials, including human voices and birdsong, taken from his personal sound archive. He's a dramatic writer, amassing the attention with a pounding, propulsive opus. The grip doesn't slacken although the mood varies greatly throughout. It ranges from a Can-like chug to dense thickets of incantatory sonic shadows. The music on *The 5th Elephant* combines the hooks and drive of rock, the textured rhythms of electronics, the atmospheric suggestiveness of successful film scores and the structural logic of formal composition. It's easy to perceive the basis for Gländien's tried and tested affinity with Cutler, a percussionist whose playing carefully sustains creative tensions between the throbbing heart and the fixed imagination.

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IRO HAARLA & PEPA PAIVIEN YARRA YARRA

NOVEMBER 1112517 CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Though Edward Vesala no longer helms the magnificent Sound And Fury Orchestra – he died in 1999 – his exploratory path continues to be charted by his widow and musical partner Iro Haarla. Haarla, who consolidated Vesala's ideas into orchestral notation, still plays piano in the Orchestra. But her latest album is a much more minimalist creation, involving a duo with another Vesala collaborator, saxophonist Pertti 'Pepa' Paivinen. Paivinen appeared on many Vesala albums including *Kalevala* and *Invastive Vesala*, and has also been a member of Anthony Braxton's Final Group, ensemble Braxtona.

On *Yara Yara*, Haarla plays piano, harp and jeng, a Chinese instrument from the same family as the Japanese koto that lies flat on a table, for which she provides her own rhythmic tuning. The recording was made in the darkest days of the Finnish winter solstice, and the mood is often melancholy, even bleak. "Yara Yara" is an Aboriginal phrase meaning "bowing, flowing," and the tempos meander and ad lib, with never a groove in sight. But any sense of sameness is deplored by changes of instrumentation – between saxes and flute, and piano harp and jeng – and subtle variations in its sparse moods.

Half the pieces are by Edward Vesala, the rest by Haarla and Paivinen. A stark beauty often emerges, for instance in Paivinen's abstract soprano playing on "Ready To Go". Charting an annotation through grief and a nang again from the aukas, the opening track "Ferid" ("Phoenix") features Haarla's harp and Paivinen's soprano sax. Vesala's "Invisible Storm" brings them closer to jazz, with Paivinen on tenor, looking to Coltrane's or Gato Barbieri's screening favour. He goes so deep on baritone on "Saint Ladiess" that at first it sounds like a bass sax. It needs time to sink in, but this meeting of life and ice is a slow-burning future classic.

STEFAN KEUNE & JOHN RUSSELL EXCERPTS & OFFERINGS

ACTA 14 CD

BY BEN WATSON

Free improvisation is intimate music, probably the most intimate there's ever been, which may explain why attempts to make it project (freeform rock) or grandioso (improv orchestra) are fought with pent, often simply proving that straight rock groups or orchestras can play better solos or create more interesting textures.

Guitarist John Russell is an intimate's intimate, so as an improviser he plays a strong suit. His instantly recognizable guitar phruses have none of Derek Bailey's "skewer you" attack, none of Eugene Chadbourne's fiery chops, none of Joe Mania's churning autoharp complexity, yet they might well be the epitome of what makes free improvisation a lively music. His song-board is warm and inviting, and his harmonic kites are persistently interesting, like a sympathetic interviewee whose questions keep raising cheer and opening doors.

Soprano and also saxophonist Stefan Keune played 14 minutes with Russell at Liverpool's Blueprint Arts Centre on 16 November 2000. The rest of these duets were recorded in London four

days later. He plays the squeaky door style of snaresheet that results from intensive questioning of the presence of pitch. Pecking at the notes and then chomping around it, destabilises the harmonic structure and creates bawdy spaces for play (this is not just an Improv specialty: check out jazz saxophonist Berne Wallend). Russell finds a role almost akin to jazz 'comping', except here the music has allowed to an endless obligato, the pressure of the changes forever postponed. Keune and Russell have so many moves in their fingers they can pack this space with musical ideas.

Improvisation is intimate and compressed makes the gestures so small that the wist view might be that nothing 'happens'. The listener certainly gets the measure of the music quickly: no huge surprises or major transformations in store. But the ways in which the duo's superfast phrases slip and slide over each other are inventive, non-explosive, speculative and pretty.

KONTAKT DER JÜNGLINGE

DE STADT DS89 CD

BY DAVID KERNAN

This is the second installment in an ongoing series of collaborations between German sound artists Thomas Körner and Asmus Tietchens. Released in an edition of 100, it's a live record of an event staged inside the hull of MS Strela, a ship harboured in Rostock, East Germany. Between them, Tietchens and Körner span two generations of inventive electronic noise. Tietchens has been active since the 1960s, morphing found sound into outbows of wrought iron noise, while Körner came to prominence in the 90s with the beatless, bleak minimalism he recorded under his own name and the more rhythmic outbursts of his Pöller Rölli outfit. Here the sound of harsh, degenerated electronics dominates, albeit without the sense of organic expansion that characterizes Körner's solo work. 0 is claustrophobic, noisy, unsettling. Indeed it feels like an awl swishing through a long submerged and sombre-encrusted vessel, although at times jabbing bass makes it all sound a little James Bond-like. And when it ratchets down to a throbbing sub-bass, it starts to feel more Love Boat than decaying industrial wreck. Still, Körner always cuts his music with plenty of cluney humour, and even at his bleakest he can't resist shaking his ass a little. He's a gun, that leaves Tietchens to play the straight man, cemetering manicure walls of fibrous, fluctuating tones and pushing on through to the silence down the hall. Eee, stupid, possessed – exactly what you're looking for in modern electronics.

LAUB FILESHARING

KONTINUO KY002 CD

BY TOM HODGE

On their third album, Berlin duo Laub finally find they've got home on their side. Now the fashionability of all things Tröpisch has waned, their music has room to breathe beyond the confines of lay categorisation. What's most striking is their sheer delight in structuring noise inside songforms. Sometimes they work a shifting backdrop of noise and texture against their lyrical flow and then reveal in the unpredictability of the results. Equalising the mechanics of their songs suggests process is as

important to them as the finished pieces, perhaps more so. Regardless, their songs are shorn of any conventional melodic input. They are instead pieced together from discrete edits, noises and glitches, overlaid with Antje Grae-Fisch's whispered or murmured vocals, which convey a sense of intimacy amid the rear chaos of processed sound.

The opening "Mofa" is almost conventional, to the extent that a bass throb and vocal croon threaten to overwhelm the competing noise blips and shifting sounds. "Responses" is more convincing in the way it jetisons that track's obvious electroacoustic/voice interface for more protean shifts between lyrical and machine noise. "Worship" continues in this pleasingly wayward fashion, as it struggles to impose a narrative drive on the surrounding dissonance, which it finally pulls off by harnessing its dangerous energies instead of succumbing to its potential for disruption.

Occasionally the process fails them, as when glitch-peppered rhythms collide with the compressed lyrical webage of "Morges", but even this comparative failure is an interesting one. Indeed, Laub music feels like an ongoing search for poetry in unlikely places in the hard, metallic sound of electronic percussion and the ghostly grind of malfunctioning machinery.

JOËLLE LÉANDRE & KAZUE SAWAI ORGANIC-MINERAL

IN SITU 18223 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

This is indeed a forceful record. Double bass and 17 string koto are given a good slapping, beaten with sticks, bottlenecked and so on. Sadly this is forcefulness employed to cover up an absence of musical ideas.

But first the myth, evident in Patrick Boileau's sleeve notes. A highly trained musician from a classical tradition hirsically breaks free from the suffocating institutions and blossoms in a brave new world of free improvisation, thereby transforming her nose at the academy, and liberating the instrument from the straitjacket of classical techniques. To call this a myth is not to say it's untrue, just that it's a sentimental story we tell ourselves to make sense of phenomena. Bassist Léandre won first prize at the Conservatoire and joined Pierre Boulez's Ensemble Intercontemporain. Koto player Sawai founded the Kawai koto school in Tokyo with her husband, fellow Wimbo Taduo Sawai.

When these musicians chuck their toys out of the pram and improvise, there's no guarantee the results will be listenable. At least it may be playful, and there's a sense that the performances were watchable, at those stoked thrusts inverently into instruments, all these mighty slaps of strings against wood. But without the theatre, here we merely have a recording of a live concert. Léandre sets the pace, bashing from one forcefully played motif to another. At one point, she tries some vague 'Eastern' singing, which is embarrassing but brief. Perhaps out of deference to a more experienced improviser, Sawai copies Léandre's phrasing and approach accounted. But disastrously, for Léandre's side track, meanwhile, is a ragtag of cutaway effects from 20th century koto compositions forcefully played. By halfway through the depressing album I

would have paid money for a moment of genuine communication. Instead, I get plenty more thinking of defaceless wooden instruments, and plenty more empty but forceful playing.

GARY LUCAS

THE EDGE OF HEAVEN

INDIGO LIBRARY CD

BY HUA HBU

Upon graduating from Yale in 1976, one-time Captain Beefheart guitarist Gary Lucas burrowed around lawns for a couple of years, ostensibly working for his dad's import-export business but in reality dedicating himself to earnest to music and art. How he discovered the pop songs of Chow Hsuan and Bai Kwong, two legendary performers of screen and stage from the 1940s and 50s. Is he honest, Lucas's own sleeve notes to his album of covers of material made famous by Hsuan and Kwong had me conning before a note had been played. It's not any one comment he makes, rather, it's the early "Western" glaze with which he regards the Chinese in his narrative. He underscores his declared passion for the music with descriptions of the Chinese singers that exoticise and freeze them as "Others" whose unique skills are alien and opaque. The way he describes his relationship to Chinese women — a "bond after with my Chinese girlfriend, a knockout hellion from Singapore by way of the Szechuan named Ling-ling" — sounds like he's rehashing old disapproving stereotypes about Dragon Ladies and Shanghai Li. Living on Chow Hsuan to an "Oriental Giulietta Moans" is perhaps the strongest moment, since the term "Oriental" fell out of use in American academic and political circles in the 1980s, when people realised it was like an Asian version of the N-word. By the time I played the CD I was half expecting a cacophony of gong hits and wondring pantomime snakes.

But the music is absolutely beautiful and unfixed. The evocative opener "Old Dreams" unlinks like finger shapes of slumber, Lucas's ringing notes wandering and searching with human reach. His take on "The Mad World" is earthy and skittering, like John Frusciante crushing Shanghai. "He Will" is beautifully resonant at a patient, almost teasing pace. Most impressively, Lucas shades in the unspoken sentiments of these pop verses, the plaintive wails or agonising back and forth implied in the originals. His guitar cuts different textures from these standards, making them his own. He goes whammy on "When Is My Home?", unearthing an unstable, jangly electric blend of blues fizzze with pop wisdom. On "If I'm Without You," his arch acoustic tone replaces the vocal with more expression that words could hold.

He enlists two singers on half of the songs: Celest Chang and Gabou. Well suited for the music's upper state climbs, their voices are divine, though enunciation trips up some of the cascading rolls and flows since, in Chinese, the individual accented stresses of words and phrases define meaning. However, on the captivating "Songstress On The Edge Of Heaven," the interplay of Chang's meandering, beautifully flighty hums and Lucas's fervent probing works perfectly. But Gabou's sharp diction often gets garbled in dressing, though her cool, flat voice finely sings impressively on the contemplative "The Moon In The Street," an album highlight.

Still, the instruments come out best, partly because Lucas produces so many competing song elements out of his lone guitar, or in

settings minimally arranged for guitar, bass and drums. Indeed, there must confirm the legitimacy of Lucas's Chinese project, even as it is partially undermined by the sleeve notes. Yet ironically, if anything, his *Edge Of Heaven* is a faithful reading of an imperfect, original re-reading. He's attempting to preserve local authority in these Chinese pop songs, when in reality their popularity and style were directly related to forces of globalisation and Western modernisation. There's nothing intrinsically "Chinese" about Bai Kwong's or Chow Hsuan's songs — they were pop songs adhering to pop rules. Beautiful and melodic in their original form, they're even more beautiful and amazingly alive this time around.

ROB MAZUREK

AMORPHIC WINGED WALKING ROAD WRT 100 CD

BY JULIAN CONWELL

Rob Mazurek's comet and electronics contributors have etched his signature deep into the various Chicago underground groupings. He's also been identifiable as a key player with *loopz* 217. But it was *Dead Keelers* in *The Wire* 201, "At this point I don't even look at myself as a comet player anymore, I'm more just like a sound generator." Entering Chicago's *Sonic Electronic Music Studio* early in 2006, he generated this solo venture at a tangent from his group work.

On *Amorphic Winged Walking Road* appears above all as sonic designer, a creator and manipulator of patterns. On the delicate, insinuating opening track, "Time Coded Single," ethereal piano dabblings are intersected with Sam Peckinpah's obsessively repeated guitar figures. On "Strange Logics," a piece broadly recalling Hugh Hopper's *loopz* tape-loop adventures, his comet weaves around Mathew Law's popping bass. Law recurs on "The Shaping Light," where layered brass thins out to make room for a gently unfolding, hypothetically spacy groove, assembled with vocoder, bass, guitars, keyboard, Casey Rice, Michael Kandor on keyboards and second bassist Ken Brown.

The echoing reverb and buzz of "Devoided Roots" signals a shift towards a more codified electronic music language, perpetuated through the truncated piano notes, processed into wisps and slurs, that are bleed into "Steel Cut Out." Initially the piece feels like an overlong experiment carried out in public. With repeated listening it picks up some of the warmth of earlier pieces. "Shower Muzak" delves deeper into electronic music's vocabulary of sonic abstraction. The title track, made with technical assistance from John Hemmer, restores breath and blood via comet, fragments of voice and shadowy percussive fluttering. At a tangent but not separated from his other work, this is Mazurek pushing back his own limits with striking results.

JOE MCPHEE QUARTET

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

UNIVERSAL MUSIC STUDIES UMS061P2006 2XCD

THE NIHILIST SPASM BAND &

JOE MCPHEE

NO BORDERS

NON MUSICA REX NM002 2XCD

BY DAVID KEENAN

Canada's Nihilist Spasm Band have got to be the most hopelessly inventive improvising ensemble this side of The Mothers Of Invention. Since the

mid-80s they've been oppaling rock and jazz fans alike with the toybox tonality of their kazoo-led orchestras. Their modus operandi is based around the concept of joyous noise played communally and with no regard for generic demarcation. Over the years they've expanded their palette to include electric guitar, bass and violin, but thankfully they still play them as if they were large plastic toys. Their profile has increased recently with the inauguration of the annual *No Music Festival* in London, Ontario, which has attracted pilgrims like Thurston Moore, Lee Ranaldo and Bert Berns.

No Borders matches them with improvising trio, saxophonist Joe McPhee, the two forces split on its face. McPhee sounds lost in their company, as if he's waiting for things to take off. He's essentially a dynamic player, whether carving solo space or charging a large ensemble, whereas The Spasm Band play little regard to dynamics of any kind. They simply start playing and, after a while, they stop. A more worrying trend is how Bill Edey — the one who launches the improvisation with a giddy monologue — is starting to sound like the kind of despot he parodies, as he spits in mock, raged rage. McPhee is packing an impressive arsenal here — didgeridoo, tenor sax, pocket comet and Casio saw — but he only really gets attuned with his magic in the set's smaller groupings.

By instead McPhee's first record, *Underground Railroad*, cut live in 1969 at New York's Holy Cross Monastery and reassured here for the first time, it takes its name from the system that helped escaped slaves make their way from the Southern USA to Canada and freedom, and as such it's an emotionally charged set. The cavernous acoustics of the Holy Cross Monastery make for monstrous fidelity. Drummer Ernest Boettig sounds like he's charging the barricades singlehandedly, with bells and percussive clanking like chairs in his wake. McPhee makes a dramatic entrance alongside saxophones: Reggie Parks, playing triumphal parallel fumes, which basic beats down with his kickdrum. But it's more than mere inchoate rage, even at this early stage, McPhee has fully integrated all sorts of extra-musical techniques — shreds, wails, spoken scat — to create some lovely lyrical passage. Paired with *Underground Railroad* is an archival recording of McPhee's Contemporary Improvisational Ensemble, live at the same Monastery six months earlier. It marked his first public performance on *tenor*. As a first shot, his playing is satisfyingly messy.

ALAN MOORE & TIM PERKINS

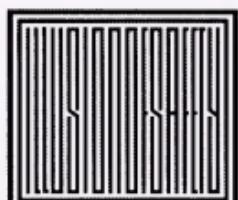
ANGEL PASSAGE

RE P04 CD

BY EDWIN POUNCEY

As these two intriguing releases confirm, former *Banshees* bass player Steven Severson's RE label is responsible for some of the most majestic Dark Ambient rock around. The label's taping into a completely different strain of magickal music which has shrugged off its 80s Goth image to emerge kaleidoscopic, resounding and terrible to behold.

Writer, artist and magician Alan Moore was responsible for creating *Watchmen*, the "graphic



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DIE STADT

Soundcheck

novel that changed the attitude and thinking of many who had never before dreamt of piecing up a comic book. He also wrote *From Hell*, a serialised account of the Victorian Jack The Ripper murders, with comic artist Eddie Campbell supplying the visuals. That Moore's knowledge and relationship with the dark side is no pose soon becomes evident when listening to him perform *Anger Passage*. Written as part of *Tygers Of Wrath*, a celebration of the life and work of William Blake held at the South Bank's Purcell Room last year, his atmospherically rich, psychedelic and geographic rant takes the listener on a whirwind tour through the artist's tempestuous life and the London that was the source of his inspiration. Angry illustrated with Tim Perle's illuminated instrumental passages, he conflates Blake's life in the sprawling, ancient city – teeming out flaming tigers and exploding red dragons on street corners – with his own experiences. Centred on Moore's now-thoroughly incarnation, we are flown over infernal factory chimneys on bats' wings and blasted down leprechaun alleys to be shown shimmering, smoking wisps of heaven and hell.

Like Moore, Edinburgh's Human Geist, aka wacky Michael Begg and illustrator Deyck Thomas, are also in tune with the dark side of music, art and nature. Their intensely constructed debut, *Consolation*, is a fear-filled symphony of terrors which, once again, leads the listener into the unknown, opening up new worlds of sound experimentation where rhythms and beats are compounded into seamless sheets of vibration and feedback. Interspersed with sampled voices and altered instrumentation, *Consolation* becomes a living entity that gradually entwines your imagination inside its numerous sonic tentacles and refuses to relinquish its grip.

THE MUSIC ENSEMBLE THE MUSIC ENSEMBLE

ROARERATED HOUR TO CO

BY TOM PERCHARD

The Music Ensemble was active around New York in the mid-1970s. Although its membership was somewhat irregular, their core was a quartet of bassist William Parker, Béla Bang on violin, saxophonist Daniel Carter, trumpetist Malik Bentsa and drummer Roger Bond.

These concert recordings were made at two New York colleges. That's appropriate: these are apprentices' performances. The sound is extremely noisy, but it's still too easy to deduce that, collectively, the music just isn't very good. Parker and Bang are far and away the best players here, although both are often very difficult to hear. Together with Carter, they provide a certain amount of interest. But the horns dominate over the album's 70 minutes, and although Carter and Carter try to disguise their youthful tentativeness as something more mystical and portentous, their dialogue remains earthbound throughout.

Each performance begins uncertainly, and in these fragile openings is the best music. Bang and Carter's pentatonic scales and going strokes lend a maddening attractiveness to the queer moments, and at least, Parker's already accomplished playing can be properly heard. But on the rare occasions the music gets going, Bang becomes inaudible while Carter and Bentsa continually warm up their scalar needs.

NEWBAND

HARRY PARTCH &
DEAN DRUMMOND
INNONA 561 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

A good deal lies for fans of the maverick, self-taught composer and instrument builder Harry Partch (1901-74) – these new recordings of Eleven Intonations and Clerk Brother represent more than half an hour of his music. The rest of the CD has two substantial pieces by Dean Drummond, custodian of a large collection of Partch's instruments. Threatened with homelessness for a while, the collection has been safely housed since 1999 in Montclair State University in New Jersey.

The two Partch pieces are from the 1940s. The chiming strings of *Kithara* and adapted guitar, combined with diamond marimba and cloud chamber bowls, conjure up Indonesian music, or maybe Portugese. Both the sounds and the microtonal scales are exotic, and Partch definitely has a place in the story of mid-century American exotic. He took on a massive task to singlehandedly reinvent Western music, instruments, scales and all. Yet he ended up with a strange simplicity that remained way outside public gaze until, shortly before his death, minimalism encouraged people to take another look. Set amongst silvery tenor violin and chimes, the maddest read gear is treated by a variety of poets: a mystical vision of paradise by Ella Young and a harsh look at urban degeneracy in 'The Street' by Willard Motley. Over Partch's gentle rhythmic patterns, the texts are intoned like psalms in the rich baritone of Robert Osborne. Osborne's microtones are accents, though I wonder if an untrained singer like Partch himself, might have seen the songs better. I was reminded of a bygone avant garde, when a figure like WB Yeats rushed about London attending seances while reinventing an Irish theatre which would employ his own music for the long-forgotten recorder and psaltery. And in fact yeats was only the writer in contact with Partch, who had very little to do with composers. Indeed, part of his charm is that musically he doesn't fit in anywhere at all.

Dean Drummond serves Partch's music well. His own writing has the same strong sense of colour and microtonal concern. However, he is not self-taught, and his composing brings back some of the dense complexity and busy quality that Partch was presumably reacting against. His Congressional Record is a hysterical and bizarre setting of a speech by Senator Jesse Helms in favour of abolishing the National Endowment for the Arts – a heavyhanded attempt at musical satire a world away from Partch's light touch.

PHOSPHOR PHOSPHOR

POTLUCK PS01 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

A clearly focused project from Berlin, Phosphor is an eight piece Improvising group, including trumpetist Alin Dömer, percussionist Burkhard Bens and Andrea Neumann (double piano, mixing desk). By no means a wild free for, all this is a honed down disciplined music, a carefully constructed group sound in which individual contributions rarely point out.

The album's opening moments are its most extrovert – with blasts of steam and grinding

metal, it's as if we are touring a steelworks. Later the group settles into creating sonic environments with an Industrial sound. What intrigues me is how the music espouse to the states of non-musical landscapes. It doesn't sound like a take full of gase, but it evokes that kind of non-human organisation of sound. Recently Peter Caseck's recordings of London and the Lea Valley have had us listening to an overhead cable fixing above a disabled electric train, tadpoles trying to eat an underwater microphone, or the clangring made by Deptford market traders dismantling their stalls. Phosphor deploy their tuba, saxophone and electronics in the hope of sounding as good, as inevitable if you like, as those tadpoles.

There's also influence from contemporary composition on the organisation of the group. If not the sound. One of composed music's secrets is that musicians sit for large amounts of time playing nothing, contributing at key moments. For an eight piece Improv group to adopt this tactic has a major refining effect. Still, I confess I found the album interesting rather than exciting. Much of it is restrained and low key, and, missing the theatre of seeing the octet perform live, my attention drifted. Amid the hisses and fizzs, there's little feeling of anyone playing an instrument, or performing, or being concerned with beauty. Only an acoustic guitar (Annette Krebs or Michael Renkert?) offers moments of individual musical statement. But there's no doubt that, in reading against musical bluster and expressiveness, Phosphor have produced some remarkable ensemble sound.

ALFRED SCHNITTKE CPO 907000 CD

Alfred Schnittke (1934-98) turned to writing film music in the early 60s from economic necessity, since the Soviet authorities frequently blocked performances of his concert music. He eventually made quite a good living, and managed to get his own family apartment where he could compose without always having to endure the blare of his hockey on TV, his father-in-law's addiction. The artistic results were intriguing, for Schnittke not only incorporated parts of his film music into his concert music, but also worked the other way round. Alexander Vaskin's excellent biography, published by Phaidon, analysed Schnittke's complementary approach. Where other classical writers treat film music as unimportant, Vaskin explores how it acted as a laboratory for Schnittke's concert music.

The film music on this disc is arranged in 'concert suites', and not all of it is consistently worthwhile. *My Past And Thoughts*, written for a TV series directed by Alexander Herzen and featuring chamber ensemble and choir, is scroppy. Schnittke's postmodern polyphony emerged in the 1970s, an eccentric plundering of baroque and classical styles, but here there's no composer's signature at all – this is just hackwork. The two later suites are another matter. Schnittke was developing his final, austere style when he wrote the music for Vassily Pudovkin's silent film *The End Of St Petersburg* (1927). The electronic music was written by his son Andrey, a collaboration repeated with Jun Kaga's *The Master And Margarita* (1993).

But most compelling is the music for *Agony* (1974/81). Elem Klimov's two part version of the Rasputin story. The film was officially classified as subversive, and Schnittke's music was destroyed, only to be reconstructed with difficulty in 1987. But this is surely one of the great movie scores, characterised by familiar Schnittke trademarks such as his love of screeching harpsichord and celeste. The big theme is still strong: I've been playing it fairly obsessively – not usually advisable with Schnittke unless you're looking to commit suicide. It reappears more ambiguously in the finale of the Second Cello Concerto from 1980, but for raw power *Agony* wins out. The sleeve comes with a beautifull cover picture of Rasputin, with huge ice hanging down from his hair.

MASAYOSHI URABE
URKLANG
TILDA 51 CD
BY ALAN CUMMINGS

Cultural critic Donald Richie has written of the role of empiricism in Japanese art, from the medieval ink paintings of Sesshu to the films of Ozu. Empiricism is never a negative, an absence. Rather 'it has its own weight, its own specific gravity. Its own presence'. Empiricism is in fact crucial in that it defines, limits and supports.

This painterly conception is crucial to the music of the radical Japanese artist turned solo alzot, Masayoshi Urabe. First encounters with his sparse discography (his last release was a double album in an edition of 100, only available at one record shop in Kyoto) are usually bewildering. There's as much silence there is music, lengthy pauses suggesting that the musician has popped out for a fag break in performance, however, the methodology is made starkly visible. Urabe's music doesn'tloat to him on the breeze – it has to be toruously summoned through sweat, muscular tension, ragged breathing and maiming physical contortions. What in lesser hands would be a selfconscious display is transformed into a mysterious and gripping ritual, ripe with the potential of physical violence. Turn the volume up and these 'sons illocutionnaires' (the Urklang of the title) let the empiricism out of which Urabe spins his music, rendering the combatting void pregnant with threat.

Ultimately, it is this rock'n'roll struggle with his own corporeal essence that defines Urabe's work. Though he might play the alto, absolutely nothing here suggests the laidback cool of jazz or the realms of intellectual structures of free improv. The sheer brutality of Urabe's sound is slightly more tempered than on previous releases, welling buoyantly into the semblance of sweet melodies before nosing into the overblown upper register. Like Arnaud grappling with madness in his later years, Urklang presents the sound of a man finding terrible beauty at the limits of his own endurance, the physical commitment underlined by drooling gaps and a coughing fit. His performance is frightening in its dedication, a fully realised fundamentalism that cannot but, after your conceptions of sound and nothingness.

VARIOUS IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS RHYTHM SOUL JAZZ RECORDS CD BY DON WATKIN

The title of this immediately conceived, if imperfectly executed compilation of British post-

Size Matters

3", 7", 10" and other misshapes



Cards on the table: Kim Cascone's Aesthetic CDs

The 3" cardstocks issued by digital composer **Kim Cascone's** Aesthetic label are beautiful little wallet-sized objects which recall the automated beepers of Commodore Pet-era computing. Cascone, formerly the founder of US Ambient label Street, has so far released four of them. He has two sole efforts, *Parasites* (Aesthetic A001 3" CD) and *Oast Theories 2: Alchemical Residue* (A004 3" CD), display the parameters, and imitations, of his self-styled 'residualism', a technique where software patches strip away much of the acoustically recognizable qualities of sonic information. Like the Fair label's output, Oast Theories arches over wide horizons, yowling tone-buzzes streaking overhead with the immediate foreground nasties with crackling micro-events.

Parasites presents more abstracted digital noises, grizzly burrs feeding on a central glitch. Cascone's claim that his music 'enables the listener to "view" the work from multiple perspectives' is hard to relate to the fixed results, but there's no doubt the pronounced spatial qualities of his mix. Still, it's a little hard to swallow, even in this bouncy chinked-up-bass-guitar electronics, nothing flutters and nuptial bowel movements that resemble a demonstration LP for a modular synthesizer since 1974. Pick of the bunch is his collaboration with **Keith Rowe**, *With Hidden Noise* (A002 3" CD). The high digital frequencies are earbashed by Rowe's sampled electric guitar, and the difficulty of distinguishing between improvised events in real space and their subsequent processing creates tension. The great thing about Rowe's generation of improvisors is they don't need to describe a musical collaboration as 'creating a fleshy space where data could float and mingle, engulping the listener in a world where narrative doesn't exist, only atmosphere' – they just sideways add play.

Andrew Burtt's collaboration with Cascone, *Rust & Blue Gown* (A003 3" CD), is the fleshy space in question, bearing superficial resemblance to Nobuyuki Takemura's 'Motor' and some of Cerd Duda's recent work. Cascone's discourse puts the process, rather than outcome, at the heart of his work, but there's something interesting stirring among his metaphors of rust, dust, parasites and residue. (RY)

I can't read the titles on *Hel Who Doe's 7"* for inc Japan Overseas label (Japan Overseas J09842 7") or find out anything about the group, but their sound has a sentiment that doesn't really need translation. It's soft vocal psych in the breezy style of certain late 60s Californians, with muddled voices, acoustic guitar flings and the heat of jew harp on the breeze. There is a strange stodginess to the monotonous here that makes it almost an chin-wagging as that first record by Tokyo psych outfit White Heaven (the one on which they burned down the Family Osg and recreated it in their image). Admittedly, this is a completely different bag, and one that is objectively less interesting, but the sheer orkhanianism here measures with its dreamy gesticulation. (BC)

Volker Hermann is a German guitarist whose work was previously unknown to me, but Jungle Guitar Music (*Happy Zoot 2.0/Y003 7"*) is really something not at all akin to anything else around. On 'Jungle Guitar Music' the bumble of the strings is interspersed with collaged sounds that overwhelm any sense of ordinary structure or instrumentation. On 'Hen' Mus' the approach is perhaps a bit similar to that of Eugene Chadbourne's circa his *Parasita* recordings, pecking around the guitar's neck like a carburetor puppet. On 'Gowals' we're treated to something more in line with the early work of Steffen Basko-Jungmann. All in all, it's an unpredictable varied and very brazen performance. What's the mix line, anyway? (BC)

Jahleelous's *Christmas Day* (*Mesuu Musu 021 7"*) is a hideous though drift-run-theory of The Beach Boys' *Santa Christmas* catalogue, done by some travellers associated with the most recent European incarnations of Red Cockey. And, indeed, it buggers the whole shambol with an artful aspert of 'puff' that would do May Thompson herself proud. Ouch! My eye! (BC)

The first 45, *Sediment Thesis* (*Kakendokoro K.K. 006 7"*), by those puritans of the contemporary Finnish underground, **MNEM**, is an excellent piece of sound manipulation that spatters along like the head of Luca Brasi rolling around in a big cleaves drum. The basic sounds were produced by 'analogue gadgets' which were then fed through some old metal to rocks, where they were allowed to decompose, shrivel and rotte. The results are quite beautiful, especially heard in

the dark. The first piece consists of undefinable, although natural sounding, events. They seem to be happening just over the horizon, but there is some sort of incoherence made the listener's brain that keeps them from catching. The second piece is a bit more clattery, with something that sounds like a metal pig mass trapped inside the spinning wheel cover of a Cadillac sedan pointed straight towards magnetic north. It's a nice, dark, thoroughly yowling combination. (BC)

Sondreli/Harald Sack *Ziegler's 200 Accordionists* (*September Horm (Empress) ESO4 7"*) is the third in the *Emphasio* series, a us of split 7"s, which combine different artists performing complete music using just one instrument. Sondreli's layered use of chopped and smoothed accordion bits gives their side a flavor akin to some of Rüdiger Carl's work with the Cows Quartet – that same kind of diligently built avant-garde suspension hat thing, y'know? Coliger Hasaki *Sack* employs the French horn in a rechanneled way that makes many of its moves absolutely unforgettable. When the horn begins a more characteristic sound midway through the piece, it does so almost as a fox might emerge from the long stanchion of an elephant trapped in a trap. Which is a nice thing to witness, even aschordian. (BC)

Monsieurje 1 & 2 (*Dachauhui GHCHO1 7"*) is another fine single from the Dutch duo **Vance Orchestra**, whose last 7" (*oN Ons*) was an ear-banging pile of semi-chaotic sound, using drums as a subtle component of the whole, rather than giving them the sharp focus so many artists have been after lately, is one of the Vance Orchestra's signature operations, and they continue that here. Drums can pile up in certain corners of their studio, but other crackling piles soon obscure our view of them, using some source sounds that have a very pleasant retro-futurist bent, these guys manage to make the sophistication of their assemblages feel writing, without being slobby. In that sense, they are like a fine sash. And who among us could ask more of a mere record? I mean, really? (BC)

Getting back to his early Advanced Environmental Control recording for Irene decau, **M Behrens** has been interested in shaping context to form post-national narratives within his transient compositions. Similar in structure to *The Haifer Ifo's Bang! An Open Letter* but without the conspiracy subplot, *Transcend* (*Edison... XVII 2X3" CD*) is a complex collage of digitally manipulated field recordings, electroacoustic multi-mixes and textural cracklings that implies a physical movement through a series of sermonically charged spaces. Highlighted most clearly within 'Politics' / *Stommen 1 & 2*, Behrens punctuates the divisions between his collage elements of detailed environmental recordings and air duct rumblings quite literally with a recurring motif of a heavy pneumatic gate locking, as if the listener were crossing the thresholds into unknown telepathic architectures. While staying silent about what this 'Political/Statement' specifically refers to, Behrens is pretty convincing in his contextual sleights of hand, revealing the psychological resonance of a particular sound, while always hiding any overtly specific content. (JH)

Obviously designed to slot next to your *remastered* copy of the double 7" single, *'Free Jazz Und Kinder'* by *Han Bennink, Peter Brötzmann and Fred Van Hove*, on the shell marked *'Free Improv singles'*, here is one pressed in an edition of 300 by *Han Bennink and Eugene Chadbourne* from *Estate Veld* (Just Another Ass RU JA01 7"). Although no one can find prints, who will give together a proper single-sided alignment, the black and white cover 'Tip' by Chadbourne's daughter Jenny is a fine example of scratch-away psych rococo. On one side, Chadbourne plays Eric Dolphy's 'Miss Ann' and Lennies Tristano's 'Won' on unaccompanied guitar, on the other, he is joined by Bennink for an improvisation which segue into a frenetic version of 'Miss Ann', a recording from 1961. Chadbourne first heard Bennink drum on *Last Date*, one of Dolphy's last recordings, and he includes a note pointing out how special it was for him to play the tune with the Dutch drummer. Meanwhile, *Estate Yod* (run jointly by Sonja Matthes professor emeritus Byron Coley and Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore) mention that the proficiency of Chadbourne's releases should not cause us to 'underestimate the sheer improvisational genius of Eugene's guitar work'. They're right, the velocity and invention of the guitar picking are awesome, although prospective purchases may be better advised to track down these mosaics live. (BW) Reviewed by *Byron Coley, Jim Haynes, Ben Watson and Rob Young*

Soundcheck

park is evocative of the crowning moment of one of music's most astoundingly metamorphic periods. With the addition of The Pop Group's Brayo Smith on drums, The Sits suddenly became beautiful; the spoilt-brat princesses of punk had completed their transition into the queens of dance. The due sensibilities injected by their work with Denise Dowell sent spires flying as they perched Smith's pithingly pensive banjo. An Up had evolved from a remit who got marks for enthusiasm but little else into a stunningly original vocal style.

"Sister Is A Rhythm", their side of a shared single with The Pop Group, is the closest their recorded work comes to The Sits' live image. In retrospect, their debut does seem like a pivot, if not necessarily causal, point, in the evolution of music, with the 4/4 beat of rock giving way to a more libidinous rhythmic pattern adopted from reggae and funk. This very moment seems to have spiralled its way back through the tapestry of time, with Trevor Jackson's Playgroup mining similar territory on their recent release.

Soul Jazz deserve credit for collecting together some other marvellous moments alongside the Sits and remaking them for a new audience. But, inevitably for a collection that aims to pack a subject as huge as the early '80s flowering of blissed out dance from the compact heap of spank, spanning the electronics of The Human League and Throwing Grasle to The Pop Group's mercurious rock/soul/soul jazz, *In The Beginning* raises as many questions as it answers. Indeed, so broad is its range, it can only hope to present a few tantalising slits from a much bigger picture. Given the cooperation of the relevant rights holders, you could make a box set on this theme without exhausting the territory.

The territorial considerations are not just musical either. The Pop Group seem indissoluble from Bristol, whose thriving jazz funk and soul scene fed their inflammatory imaginations (along with enough LSD to burn out Colenso, if the popular wisdom of the time was to be believed). The Sits, living in West London's frontier.

Ladbrooke Grove, absorbed dance music by osmosis. A Certain Ratio's cover of Barrabas's "Shock Up" is testimony to the influence of Manchester's Northern Soul scene, while The Human League sprung from a Sheffield where the Birmingham blues dance is a rhythmic staple.

Perhaps focusing more tightly on the Pop Group and its offshoots — Rip, Rig & Pecar, Pugbag and Maximum Joy along with The Sits, in whose transformation they were very much a catalyst — might have made a more concise picture. 23 Skidoo are awarded two tracks, presumably to document the crosscultural fertilisation represented by their (at the time rather surprising) merger with British jazz funk outfit Lync. But, doesn't the pairing of Neneh Cherry with the core of the Pop Group to form Rip Rig & Pecar represent a more exciting cross-cultural pairing?

A Certain Ratio also get two bits, neither of them their finest, the selections accurately chart their transformations from the rather more interesting group who fused Industrial alienation with dance music, to the Donald Johnson incarnation which so successfully mastered the jazz funk template that they rendered themselves invisible. Surely the group would have been better represented by their peak moment — the Flight 12" — than a pair of tracks montaging their smooth glide into obscurity?

Contributions from The Sits, The Pop Group,

Cabaret Voltaire, This Heat and TG are certainly worth the asking price. And though the rest isn't bad, the ACR example only serves to remind that — to remix The Sits — rhythm is a silence too.

VARIOUS SPIRITUAL BEAUTY

MTA MTO12 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

Meta Records, one of the labels in orbit around Bill Laswell, is run by Janet Riestra. Riestra is associated with New York's Jhavnadi Yoga Centre, where the likes of Madonna and Beastie Boy Mike D go for some peace and quiet, and Meta's catalogue includes dance-inflected meditation music, and the Dala-Lama hooking up with trumpet Tashmin Kanda.

Containing Laswell's mission to fuse musical exploration with spiritual awakening, *Spiritual Beauty* is effectively a compilation of artists who share his aims. A theme pointed up by Holm Kiehl in a sleeve-note is exile, voluntary or otherwise, from North Africa or the Middle East. So the obviously tacitly遁的 of the opening track is the work of Cheli Sabah, an Afghan-Um di New resident in San Francisco, who worked with the Living Theater group. In the 1960s, younger, and London-based, is DJ U-Cef from Morocco. London's other contribution is the heavier, more danceable trance of Jai Wobble and Temple Of Sound. The vocaller here is Kaveh Shahin Badar, previously heard on the Prodigy's *Fat Of The Land*. Wobble's track is the most full-on of the nine — elsewhere dense textures over medium light beats are used to open our ears. Zaker Hussain's tablaos underpin Iranian Sussan Deyhim's fall-bladed singing on "Anophoush". This is Laswell reworking material from Sacred System's "Black Latus". Here, Deyhim goes to spread our ears, and most of Hamid Drake's drum kit is removed to make a mellower texture. "Whirling" brings in the racy flute of Omar Faruk Tekbilek in place of a singer, and creates a delicate take on Turkish classical music. Tekbilek works with soundtrack composer Brian Keane, a collaboration that has already produced four albums. Laswell's two other tracks break away from the formula: "Theme And Variations" showcases the virtuoso cello of Simon Shaheen over a sassy orchestra, in homage to the great moderniser of Arab music, Mohamed Abd El-Wahab. Finally, "Ancient Evengents" is a delicate mesh of electric tongue-in-cheek Laswell — its bluesy rhythm recalling YMO's master exhortant Harry Hessene.

VARIOUS TOUCH & RINGTONES

TOUCH TOKE14CD

BY JEROME MAUNSELL

The chirpy, omnipresent jingles of mobile phones are aggravating at the best of times. As this compilation from the ever-present Touch label informs us, however, a new range of phones with built-in hand dials are on the way, which will make it possible to record any kind of ringtone you want (samples, voices, sound effects), rather than the usual keyboard-generated ditty from hell. Anticipating the possibilities of this slightly alarming technological development, Touch invited various composers, artists and actors to make their own ringtapes. The results are recorded here — all 99 of them.

The rollcall of names ranges impressively far

and wide. Their combined, super-concise efforts make for pretty storage listening, especially if you attempt to have them all in one setting. There's Chris Watson's wildlife recordings of African fish eagles, spotted hyenas, wolves and other animals; Mika Vaino's pulsing, minimal sinewaves; David Gilbert's effected an-aid siren; a clutch of tones and other audio snapshots from Fennesz that are reminiscent of Nuno Correia's "Plu! Qabel"; a few "Blue Monday"-like grooves from New Order; several exchanges between Gilbert & George, delivered in a deadpan, plummy voice, along the lines of "Should we have lunch, and then go shopping, should we go shopping first?"; extreme electronic noise done from Larry 7; DJ Gasowski's "A Concise History Of California Rock Music", which sounds like vinyl spun at 1000 rpm: a wailing baffle, piercing whines, crackling records; ear-shredding turbine hum (which might tempt some people to start flinging bigger speakers to their phones for the ultimate in public provocation); brass bands, church organs, and an ultra-condensed sea sole from Evan Parker.

The lot goes on. Invariably judged as a conventional CD, Ringtones makes for a schizophrenic, intriguing, intangible, inclassifiable step-start experience. Perhaps this is what music will sound like once the world has been reduced to soundbites, and our attention spans demand five-second hits instead of three minute pop songs. As a bank of specially commissioned samples, however, it's quite handy; even if you hate mobiles. Touch supremo Jon Wieseneck's sleeve notes invite the listener to "sample, rework and employ these humble suggestions", conceding that "the likelihood of hearing one of these on the 07-34 from the suburbs is, at present, remote".

JAH WOBBLE & TEMPLE OF SOUND

SHOUT AT THE DEVIL

30 HERTZ 35H212 CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

In a year that has seen him touring his Solaris project, and releasing CDs like *Passage To Hodes* with Evan Parker and Radiation with Bill Laswell, Jah Wobble has been putting himself above recently. A punch pump or spreading himself into thin prepis? Definitely the former. Wobble's particular strength, as these project demonstrate, is a keen ear for picking the right collaborators with whom to juxtapose his signature bottom-end disturbances.

For this encounter he has joined forces with Temple Of Sound, aka Ned Sparres and Dubmester Count Dusale, formerly of Transglobal Underground. Whereas Temple Of Sound's Black Decked fused Afro-Caribbean and Latin sensibilities, *Shout At The Devil* reunites the spontaneous, "catch it as it passes" credo of Transglobal Underground's *Dream Of 100 Nations*. Mixed with Wobble's searing throb and the vocalises of Natascha Dala, Nina Miranda and Shahin Badar, it produces a unique blend of the Nile Delta via Steeleye, Cuban bronze dub.

Ned Sparres's percussion (conga, bongos, Egyptian tabla and shakers) provides insistent, constantly shifting, propulsive patterns to decentre Wobble's solid and inimitable bass carpet. Dubulah's guitar work and programming has a lightness of touch, weaving delicate, undulating and plaintive melodic lines into the

masana, yet with enough sonic darkness to give it a firm edge and the kudos of contrast. Its beautiful, falling vocals render the frenetic paths with a high gloss. Sequences with care and attention, tracks mould effortlessly to produce an uninterupted consistency; yet it leaves the overwhelming feeling of moving through a bazaar of musical delights whose range of influence is completely and inextricably at the whim of serendipity. Hence "Cleopatra King Size" has a whiff of township guitar and infectious tramp bounce, "Shoot At The Devil" has a qawali overtones, while "Mahigie Rockers" mixes a reggae drag with the kind of synthesised string treatment that Nitin Sawhney might have predicted. "La Cradle" is an amazing amalgam of spaced out guitar and Hasidic-tinged vocal over a rock heartbeat.

Wobble is big enough to never place himself permanently into the mix, and compositional credits are shared equally throughout. This is music that celebrates its disparate sources and rejoices in their points of contact with a seemingly confident result.

WORKSHOP ES LIEBT DICH UND DEINE KÖRPERLICHKEIT EIN AUSGEFLIPPTER

SONG SONG19 CD

BY DAVID KEEDAN

If the idea of "intelligent" rock music fits you with a horor, summoning visions of brainwashed dandies like the current Red Krayola line-up, Radhead, Steely Dan or Gastr Del Sol at their most arch, then Workshop are a timely finger in the eye. Coming from Cologne and based around vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Kai Althoff, Workshop accurately read two chord garage punk as teenage minimalism and stretch it to breaking point, while augmenting it with rhythmically integrated sound sound, onomatopaeas, droning electronics and crackling, monochromatic drum machines. Althoff's vocals are the real gravy, a sweet/sinister near-falsetto that is as disarming as it is disturbing.

Es Liebt Dich... is the collective's fifth album to date. That its first two albums were re-released by Japanese Kosmische label Captain I'm should give you a fairly good idea of their early forays, lengthy cut-up jams that combined the communal rolllick of the original Amon Düül with the higher minded studio logic of Faust circa *The Faust Tapes*. Es Liebt Dich... still bears such mystic tints, but now dominated by pastoral guitar and regimental rhythms, their sound has become more concise and intricately detailed. The opening "Für Wer?" names the stoned mountain whiny of cosmic courters Withnail & Westupp with giddy electronic sobs and a simple melody over conceitfully cyclical of hysteric sound generated with electro-percussion. And just in case anyone was fearing this is getting a little too complex, or a certain point on "De Verwendung", a keyboard sounds a single chord all the way through the chorus to return the music's churning, one chord monologue. However, they're most affecting on "Mesa Lux", a deep, diaphanous prayer soled on tranquil puffs of citheron and tin whistle. At least until it's totally undermined by its monstrous, wheezing rhythm track. Such sonig slights of hand change the CD with a vague air of desuet. Neither too defined nor too overt, it's just enough to leave you puzzled. □

The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled

Left to right: Sticker wie John Hughes, Lorraine Linton Smith

For **DHM/D** (DMH Editions/Rosier DMH/AVTRG22 CD) the Québec based Avtar Foundation invited eight composers to plunder the back catalogue of its DMH Editions imprint and produce new work through their remakes and transformations. German recyclist Ralf Wehovsky, of P10 D4, jolts things off with a steadily building shimmer that peaks in a fury of samples followed by a gentle, pulsing drone. Montreal taskmaster Martin Tremblay's brief contribution collapses multiple sources into a jittery faze, music and voice sped up and whistled into an agitated state. French composer Christian Calon produces a tense dystopian piece in which an impoverished and seemingly depressed human voice is hemmed in by shadowy electroacoustic forms. Tom Thamnitz contributes "Transitional Edit", a clicking glock of synthetic horn sounds, an angry and terminally insatiable jam. There are two pieces from arch plunderer John Oswald. "Omgone" (in)construts a radio phone conversation, empty words drifting amongst jethuman sounds in a communication vacuum. "Ridge" builds from ripples to waves to a breaker of lush piano music. Spikey piano runs through an animated piece by Diane Labrosse, who has played with the groups Wonder Bra Brass and Justice. Trinkling bells, organ chords and reedy bits, carbon squeaks and distorted human voices are among the other elements in this soundtrack to some ergonomic narrative. Ambient technician David Krutman spans out an enigma of another kind. His "Dithme" gradually intensifies from quiet to full gale without ever revealing the source of its luminescent thrum. Finally Alexandra St-Orge, an improvising associate of Krutman, drains the remaining air from the DMH/D atmosphere, mimicking the micro rhythms of a puncture or a gas cylinder with an open valve. A long, measured breath out. The DMH/D policy of taking risks often results in albums that include amateurish episodes yet are uneven overall. A more ambitious project, DMH/D is consistently worthwhile. **UC**

Flying Dutchman Anthology (Soul Brother SBP7/CD) chronicles the more solo-friendly, "in-demand" end of the Flying Dutchman label set up by Bob These after he left *Imperial* in 1969. It would have been nice to hear Lorraine Linton Smith's "Expansions" in context, rather than merely as dancefloor fodder for the Rue Debreyve set. Soul Brother should be lauded for resisting the obvious. But then again, Soul Brother cater to the collector set, and that mentality reads its ugly head here with the inclusion of such dive tracks as Smith's only "Beautiful Woman" and Esther Marrow's "Morning Man". Elsewhere, though, James Spalding rescues Leon Thomas's crystal striking with some Henry Thomas-style flute, Gil

Scott-Heron attempts to lull the children; saxophonist Harold Alexander gets busy over an oh so tasty hymn from Richard Davis and Bernard Purdie, Gato Barbieri takes the Tonic to Puerto Rico; and Pretty Purple foreshadows Joe Satriani's "Whirlwind Funk". **(PS)**

The Nintendo Gameboy has become almost as ubiquitous as the mobile phone, so it's amazing it's taken this long to come up with a software program for it. Designed by Hamburg art student Oliver Witschow, Nanoloop is a synthesizer and sequencer program designed specifically for its integrated sound chip. *Nanoloop 2.0* (Discus Brut/4 CD) finds artists such as Metronomy, Hrvatski, Blekton from Brechton, Pato, Vaclav Dales, Stock, Hauser & Winkler and Daptone wrestling with the extreme limitations imposed by Nanoloop, compared to their Powerbooks.

Inevitably, some give up and some cheat, but what's most notable here is how little the lack of memory and processing speed affected each artist's signature sound. Sure, the Blekton's aren't as endlessly doffy as usual, Metronomy is nowhere near as powerful and is forced to actually include some totes, and Blekton sounds like the New York band down to Juan Atienza's crib, but otherwise this is exactly how all your favourite artists would have scored the next Pokeman sequel. **(PS)**

The magnificent double CD compilation from Chicago label Helly, *Immediate Action* (Helly 36 2CD), presents the first six 12"s in their "Immediate Action" vinyl-reissue series. Each EP was a mini-compilation with upwards of three artists presenting one or two tracks, and while the series title and graphics imply a raw immediacy, the music is refined and polished. Like the Berlin label Mon Music, Helly is creating a strong label identity that is not based on a single type of music but by a common attitude through different forms and styles. It is therefore no surprise that the CDs sound less like a compilation than a particularly accomplished and diverse solo project. Many of the tracks are homages to genres. Saito + Sawaki's remix of John Hughes's "Sweet Song" sounds like a cool cuttake from an early '70s Blaxploitation soundtrack, while Sagittarius Burn's "Role Reversal Intruder" could be from a meteoric happy movie of the same period. Skier Meets The Aluminous Group present the wonderful "Next Time", a beautifully sunless ballad so full of anger it verges on violence, the stuttering loops and processed vocals that fade away halfway through perfectly captures the moment of calm before a torrent of fury. Retna, II and T Rauchmantis's minimal dubbed out Tech-House clear the path for Process's "Diffusion", a ten minute Ambient soundscape similar to Monolake's God's Desert. Unfortunately there is only one Telefon Tel Aviv track, a rema of John

Hughes's "Get Me Lost/Drinking in LF", but the lush combination of acoustic and electronics creates an exquisite set of possibilities that are cut short at just three minutes. **(BB)**

Long before Chicago became the hub of hipster post-rockers and soundscapers, it contained the fifth largest German population of any city in the world. And that meant two things: brasswest and polka. Somehow these traditions survived wartime Nazi paranoia, and polka could have had its own specialist chart in Billboard with musicians like Frankie Yankovic and Whoopee John Williamson (they just don't name 'em like that anymore) regularly selling half a million copies of their records until Elvis came along. *American Polka: Old Tunes & New Sounds* (Thorn USZB9 CD) charts the progress of polka from the Bohemian, Polish and Slovenian immigrant communities of Chicago, Cleveland and Texas at the turn of the century through the New York art world of the 80s to the Polka Midwest of today where young things turn their accordion amps to 11.

Invertibly, the old stuff is the best (Guy Klucewski, Las Lobos and the seafar authentic Frank Berendt and Karl & The Country Dutchmen excepted) — the humour so much less self-conscious and the tempo and instrumentation so much more charming — but this is nevertheless a very fun document of one of the last laudable and more unassuming strands of popular music. **(PS)**

Night Owls 01 (Deluxe DDX111 CD) is a collection of Max patch nocturnes from the fringes of the DMV electronics underground. The tracks here could very easily sleepwalk into Sub-Correlated Bleeding Gothic Ambience, but the dark sunsets and creepy-crawly backgrounds are more jetlagged late and lag than Vincent Price nightmares. Most of the artists here adhere to a kind of halting, queasy, gauzy wind-chime songlessness (the most effective being the contributions by Esa Ruoho and Lips), and in this climate the vengeful panoponias of Chessa's "The Freely" and the dazed and confused Techno of Dennis Schreiter's "Interwands" stand out. Even with mood music as well done as this, though, you still wish someone would have tossed and turned a bit more or tried to ride the bed springs instead of trying to roll lady themselves to sleep. **(PS)**

You can make all the gauzyoans avant garde and sonic theory arguments you want about dub, but fundamentally it ain't much different from elevator music. **03. Paper** (Play PUY003 CD), the third in the Tokyo label's Stone, Sissors, Paper series, finds what all good dub, dentel music and Murakz does: lulls you into a brummed, serene state where the peaking and preceding of the real world float or sink away. The tracks here from File Brasilia, The Mighty Quark, Howe B.

Quinton Jubbs, Tikieman and Suisumu Yokota are mostly exemplary Polka dub, but it's surprising Kan Iwago, of the sometimes excellent but mostly tedious Major Force, who stands out with "Zig Zag (Prototype Dub)" by eschewing moodiness, drop-out and echoes in favour of piercing icicle keyboard stats on top of a King of the Jungle beat.

The nadir of the mood music concept, however, is the cutesk soundtrack, and Parisian smarm merchant Frederic Sanchez, one half of narrowspecialists Les Freux (you can't make this stuff up), is colour's very own Yann, Vangelis and Frank Chackford all wrapped into one suave Prada-clad package complete with a Pioneer mixable CD deck (of course the guy wouldn't dream to touch vinyl — it's so gauche, darling). **Frederic Sanchez** (Sony France SANS04331 CD) features the highlights of Le Freux's spring-summer collection, including Peaches's "Levitate", Chicks On Speed's "The Chromache", to Rococo Ritz, Chilly Gonzales and Sonwave's cover of The Clash's "Human Ray". In isolation some of this stuff is fine, but together you can't help getting the feeling of lemmings jumping over the cliff, especially with the preponderance of glossy, icy electro death marches. Of course, this begs the question: is beauty simply in the ear of the beholder or did our styled dream some latent tendency that existed there to begin with? **(PS)**

The nearly two dozen performers whose songs are collected on *There Is No Eye: Music For Photographs* (Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40091 CD) have been the subjects of photos taken by the album's producer, John Cohen. The selections range from gospel, blues and folk recordings by the likes of Rev Gary Davis, Muddy Waters and Doc Watson to more recent folk renegades such as Bob Dylan and Cohen's own glass, the New Lost City Ramblers. Intended as an audio counterpart to the recent collection of Cohen's photography (published under the same title), the disc begins with a galvanizing performance by the members of a gospel church in Harlem ("Thank You, Lord"). What follows may be read as the attempt of a Harry Smith acolyte to create his own version of Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*, with side trips to Peru, where Cohen produced collections of indigenous mountain music. For the most part, his selections are engaging, the sole cinkers comes courtesy of jazz pianist David Amram, who trades Anita Ellis's theme for Robert Frank's Beat movie short, "Pul' My Daisy", as though he were a soaring-tour bus conductor pointing out Jack Kerouac's house. This is more than compensated for by Elizabeth Cotten's African stylings on acoustic guitar; her "On Babe, It Ain't No Lie" shortens the distance from palm wine to ragtime. **(RH)** **□ Reviewed by Ben Worthwick, Alan Cowley, Richard Henderson and Peter Shapiro**



The Boomerang

Recent reissues: rated on the rebound



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in his sleeplessness to the release of *Alice* *Coltrane's Transcendence* (Warner Bros. Masters 93624B183 CD) from 1976, BBC London Live DJ Kevin La Gendre links her "spirituality to orchestration" to arrangements produced Charles Stepney, Claus Ogerman and Greg Flcher. While there may be similarities in the lushness of sound and links between Coltrane's spiritual quest with Steppen's "positive" soul productions for Rotary Connection and Earth, *Wind & Fire*, what set Alice Coltrane apart from her fellow travellers (aside from the utter uniqueness of her instrumentation) was that her effort to approach the divine never sounded class or pat — her music was a true journey, and a difficult one at that, even if she did attempt to rehashion her husband's most challenging work into music fit for meditation. Transcendence is divided into two parts: the first featuring her trademark string sound (augmented on "Innards Sanchon" with her own tambours, timbreline and wind chimes), and the second communal Hare Krishna chant propelled by her organ and Fender Rhodes, and the finger-prick percussive of fellow devotees. Radha — Krushna Name Sankirtana (Warner Bros. Masters 93624B182 CD) from 1977, follows similarly blissful devotional blissful, with "Gowda Ja Ja," "Premi Muktin" and "Hare Krishna" sounding awfully close to some Up With People motivational number, but the more abstract "Ganesha" and "Om Namah Swaya" follow a far less easily path to transcendence. The gem in the mid-'70s Imprich, though, is *Transfiguration* (Warner Bros. Masters 93624B184 CD), a live recording with bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Roy Haynes. On the thrilling title track, she turns her sun-kissed charmer organ into an instrument as stirring as John's tenor, "Alinity" and 36 minutes of "Leo" follow suit with burning, freeform improvisations. *Transfiguration's* masterpiece is "Bhumi," on which, accompanied by a singing son, Coltrane fuses the gospel tradition with her own Eastern-inspired vision to create one of the most speculatively beautiful ballads ever recorded (PS).

Best Overall: *Arthur* (Nonesuch). The best-seller for the French R&B label's Actual series, top of the bill was Sunshine (Get Back/BY Achel GECD34 LP), a glorious, high energy session with a group that included Arthur Jones, Archie Shepp and The Art Ensemble's Roscoe Mitchell on saxophones alongside pianist Ornette Coleman, bassist and bowists Alan Silva and Maraché Favers. However, it's the young Jamaican tenor player Kenneth Thomas who really glows, spraying fireworks throughout the set but especially on "Rust", a three-way exchange with Favers and Murray. Where Murray is relentless

his non-stop sputtering cymbal work cuts a high and dione tight through the heart of the track – *Torride* is fleet and muscular, portraying Murray bombast with great, coiling tension. (OK)

More arioso then saxophones! **Dewey Redman**, one of Ornette Coleman's most imaginative opening partners, on *Dark (Get Back/BYAC Actual TE343 LP)* he's on ecstasy, singing and chanting into his horns and sounding like Hassan Sabban, the old man of the mountains. The air of Eastern trance is deepened further by his use of a buzzing mozzie on the title track, where bassist Mulach Favors and drummer Ed Blackwell support him with a tight, hypnotic groove. **Transpter Jacques** Council has been very much relegated to the margins of the free world by dint of a string of historical accidents, not least of which was the non-appearance of his *ESP-Oak* album, cut back in 1967. Of the music he made for the *Actual Session*, *Black Sun* was the stronger set but *691 Way Ahead* (*Get Back/BYAC TE3119 LP*) is still pretty thrilling. Also saxophones! Arthur Jones plays some great, undestinated whooping, which Council cuts up with some hilariously acidic logic: their epic take on trumpeter/composer Bill O'Kane's "Popper" sprawls over the whole of side two, pwing bassist Ben Gulin and drummer Claude Delhon equally of spleen. The former

the work is particularly atmospheric. (OK) The epithet "experimental" still clings to Henry Cow. Listen to their 1971 album *Western Culture* (Coral HC 40) and you'll discover Zappa, The Magic Band, Stravinsky, Who and free jazz bubbling away in the alembic, but the glistening residue is distinctly Henry Cow, assuaged in its goals and practices. Freedom is accommodated palpably so on "Gothic's Kitchen," where guest pianist Peter Schreier unleashes a tangle, nudge, nudge, but it's discredited musical intelligence and a sense of purpose rather than unfettered experimentation that keep this recording high. At that time Henry Cow was a quartet, with Tim Hodgkinson on reeds and keyboards, Fred Frith on guitars, Lindsay Cooper on bassoon, oboe and saxophones, and Chris Cutler on drums; but tambourines/violins/Anne-Marie Foxley made a important contribution to the group sound, and Guyana Rose, raised basses on the final track.

Western Culture has been remastered with three extra tracks including the rousing "Viva P's Us" featuring a spirited vocal chorus led by Oskar Knaus. (C)

Janis Xenakis La Légende d'Or (Montage 282144 CD) is a 45 minute electroacoustic composition, originally realised between 1977-78 on an eight-track tape recorder, in order to celebrate the inauguration of the Pompidou Centre. Xenakis was commissioned to create a light show in the Beaubourg square and to fill the space with sound. As one laboratory he used the studio of

Cologne WDR Radio. In interviews, Kenakis professed anxiety about increasing his electronic works for domestic listening. His interest in event and process was site-specific – or at least demanded the objective ‘blank canvas’ of modern concert hall performance – and he was not sure what the broadcast of his sounds in diminutive, non-standard spaces might mean.

Strong voices have a way of leaping technical limitations. Atrocious translations of Trotsky and Joyce have communicated with unparalleled clarity, while hearing the Bahraini gamelan on 71 pm shiekh was so baner for ears as keen as those of Messiaen and Boulez. Listening to *La Legenda O'fer* on CD may be a minor experience compared to witnessing it dominate a prestigious metropolis space, but because it invites comparison with other music on CD, it develops new faces. From the opening batzbatz/cloade harmonics, it's obviously going to be something unusual.

Of course, there are battalions of electronic experimenters out there trying to be "unusual." What is special about Xenakis's piece is that it respects cumulative logic, but can't content with a single process. Even if there's nothing here that sounds remotely "classical," its polyphony is orchestral (indeed, the more "classical" anything sounds these days, the more likely it is to come from the state, religious or musical or ascribe). There are seven levels of concealed development. Philip K. Dick structured the plot of his novels on cognitive symbiosis, setting

themes versus counter-themes, and achieved futuristic arioso utterly untroubled by historical romance, Xenakis is likewise untroubled by classical references. Even though he's miles away from any real-life ethic, his soundworld will attract anyone who delights in the close-musicological criticism of free imitations like Adam Bohman, Polwechsel and Borki! The classical element is architectural: Xenakis works through processes, but has counter-processes occurring simultaneously, so you're never disengaged than an event is nothing but itself. Because we have direct access to the materials of broadcast, CD is actually a better listen than many acoustic recordings of Xenakis's concert performances, which can have something martial and pompous about them.

The difficulty of developing a *Lügende-DIEF* is that any image – clouds of wasps desecrating empty beer cans resting on a rubbish tip, wormholes in space quotient your pulsating grey matter through a billion mystic dentists, pay for grouch through collective pain – could apply equally well to electronic releases of easy extensity and *lais apocalypse*. Xerakai's selection of relevant tools for a printed programme – Ping, Herbie, Visageyoga, Pascal and Jean-Paul on infinity, plus Robert F. Kishner on supermodel (Scientific American, December 1976) –

touches on the intriguing way in which cosmic 'science' resorts to traditional philosophical gambits

La Legende D'Ere is conscientious composed music of unison legato and rigidly Exported to loed, it's hair-on-end tenting. At moments you believe cosmic gravitational fields have chosen the centre of your brainpan for a final showdown. This is more a measure of how alienated we are from cosmic as a person (he was actually an unassuming and charming man). The piece is beautifully shaped; as the 'event' which structures it moves, we return to the cascade/quint landscape with which we started. This music has 'wonder' stamped all over it, though quite what it ultimately means still eludes me; what can cosmic pianists: sensitive men need to a building named after George Perkins? (8W)

Trombonist/trumpeter Clifford Thornton, a significant figure in the mid-60s New York free jazz scene (he appeared on recordings by Archie Shepp, Sun Ra, Manzette Watts, and Sunny Murray, as well as about a half dozen of his own releases), is all but forgotten today. His solo recordings have long been out of print. While the original masters for Freedom & Unity (Jazzhead Music Series ALP22/CO), recorded with his New Art Ensemble generally considered his best work, are now lost, this welcome issuance comes thanks to recently rediscovered tapes, and includes two previously unreleased tracks.

The *Fever* & *city scenes* took place in 1967, but the record (Joe Thornton's own Third World label) wasn't released until two years later due to distribution difficulties. Recorded, significantly, the day after John Coltrane's New York funeral (with its historic command performances by Albert Ayler and Ornette Coleman), the LP was consecrated by the appearance of Coltrane bassist Jimmy Garrison as well as screamer notes by both Coltrane and Archie Shepp. It also featured trumpeter Joe McPhee's reported debt.

The performance on *Freedom & Unity* on "New Thing" jazz at its wildest and most spirited, somewhere between the controlled collective improvisation of the early Ornette Coleman quartet and the total abandon of Ayer's group (complete with flax-heavy hair charges). Herd Avant's drumming is as unencumbered by traditional timekeeping structures as Sunay Murry's playing with the Ayer trio, but with a more solid grounding. And it's not Karl Berger's likes, airy playing (especially the extended solo on "15th Floor") that is a belligerent counter to the blearing horns of hammon, McNeese and almost Sonny King. Let's hope this important record now gets the attention it deserves. (OM) □ Reviewed by Julian Cowley, Dave Mordt, David Keenan, Peter Shaw and Barry Watson

Avant Rock

Reviewed by Edwin Pouncey

ALL GIRL SUMMER FUN BAND

ALL GIRL SUMMER FUN BAND

KK130 LP

Promiscuously preened puppy funk from a cozening quartet of flax loving, romance seeking girls who hail from Portland, Oregon. Led by Sothes' guitarist Jen Straga with keyboard player Kim Baxter, drummer Kathy Foster and Ani Deangampaa on bass, All Girl Summer Fun Band give the ironic quirkiness of Jennifer Richman And The Modern Lovers to the upfront rock 'n' roll nubile of The Ramones, whil it all the way up and set their creation free. "Cute Pie", "Cut Your Hair" and "Canadian Boyfriend" are all immediate highlights, but their topical "Cell Phone" tease (complete with annoying intro) is particularly your attention.

THE FALL

ARE YOU ARE MISSING WINNER

COG SISTER CDSGP191 CD

Just when you thought that Mark E. Smith had almost jettisoned his inner demons under control after bowing you over with the magnificent *The Unstoppable*, he instantly sheds any hint of stability and comes back instead with a mean sounding avaricious rockabilly racket which makes an apparent sense at all. Keep peeling back those ears, though, play the damn thing loud enough to wake the dead, and the new MES version eventually starts to kick in with a vengeance. *Are You Are Missing Winner* is partially hinged to a flapping version of R. Dean Taylor's classic "Getta See Jane". Around the Smith scattingers half remembered lyrics and conducts a whirlpool of splintered guitars, debauched drums and battered bass sounds with a Quasimodo. Gene Vincent leather glowers flat that claws even deeper into the raw clay of *Warrior* on that bristled rock 'n' roll and continues to fuel Smith's unique vision.

GEL

FAUST RAVVIVANDO REMIX

KLANBID NO NUMBER CD

Gel are Dave Bell (from Soft Cell) and Ingó Vulk. For this project the duo have been handpicking the master tapes for Faust's impressive *Ravvivando* album and instructed to supply a remix, something for the kids to dance around the room to. The results are pretty impressive as the pair proceed to transform the record's "Wir Brauchen Dich #6" into a mechanical beat laden rock stompers that (although Faust may heartily disagree) has elements of Future Days-era Can rippling through it. On the more cosmic "Elisopoglio Ma", however, the mood reverts back slightly to the feedback driven ghost-train ride of the original, which has been thoughtfully tacked on to the end of this just to remind you what it sounded like before Bell and Vulk attacked it.

GIANT SAND

COVER MAGAZINE

THRILL JOCKEY T-PRLL104 CD

How Giant's great Giant Sand the tick through their respective record collections and pull out a selection of favourite tunes to cover. These

include songs by, among others, Neil Young, Johnny Cash, Nick Cave and, best of all, Black Sabbath. Giant Sand's take on *The Sabbath*'s idiosyncratically memorable "Iron Man" is given a lush cocktail jazz treatment which they skewer at the tail end with a sampled bolt of forked lightning, just in case you might have forgotten that it started life as a demonic Heavy Metal number. The rest of *Cover Magazine* is equally jocular and energetic to flip through, but the nagging feeling that leaks through is that this collection is little more than a respite for Giant Sand until *Getb* returns from the bunker with enough fresh material to record a real new album.

JOHN PAUL JONES

THE THUNDERTHIEF

DISCIPLE GLOBAL MOBILE DOM0104 CD

This second solo album from former Led Zeppelin bass player and multi-instrumentalist John Paul Jones boasts Edward Gorey-style cover art and title song lyrics from cartoonist/musican Peter Bagge. There's also a guest appearance by King Crimson leader/guitarist Robert Fripp, who weighs in with Jones on the opening "Leafy Meadow", a potent Prog rock instrumental which clearly sees the way ahead to a varied collection of styles to slice into existence. These songs form rock "Hoofbeats" and "Freedom Song" to Metal tinged dance beats ("Daphne") and even petulant punk rock ("Angry Angry"). The Thunderthief has its moments, but even after seven replays the record still sounds like a musical sketchbook for a longer and more complex work.

STEFFEN BASHO JUNGHANS

WATERS IN AZURE

STRANGE ATTRACTORS/AUDIO HOUSE SAABHO CD

Although Steffen Bashi-Junghans's playing style has been rightly compared to that of such avant guitarists as John Fahey, Robbie Basho, Derek Bailey and Loren MazzaCane, there is also a hint of Charlemagne Palestine swimming around in there too. The opening part of "Herr I-II" begins ploddingly enough, but as he strives to pull out new sounds from his acoustic guitar the twanging silver strings seemingly begin to explode within the instrument – in the same way that Palestine occasionally succeeds in making the strings inside his Rössendorfer Grand Imperial come adrift after a bout of intense meditative pecking. Central to Junghans's playing technique, however, is the licksome school of Fahey, Baile, Peter Lang and Lee Konitz, a style which he has successfully mastered, made his own and extended into the future.

LAMBCHOP

IS A WOMAN

CITY ISLAND 35190 CD/LP

Former sander Kurt Wagner's orchestra sized group finally struck gold with *Mon*, an album that pushed Country music and soul together and gave this new musical hybrid the wretchedness treatment. *Is A Woman* features a more personal set of songs that have been minimally constructed and designed for a smaller group of musicians. The result is a record that urges you

to lean closer to the speakers in order to fully hear everything that is being plied and sung. Wagner's songs hang in the air like spider's webs with lyrics that are just as delicately spun to become a snare where your imagination becomes hopelessly entangled. Wagner's admirable refusal to play it safe and produce a *Mon* 2 is comparable to Neil Young's decision to rip the success of his *Harvest* bestseller in the bud, you understand, but creatively as *A Woman* is Wagner's *On The Beach*.

LYDIA LUNCH WITH THE ANUBIAN LIGHTS

CHAMPAGNE, COCAINE & NICOTINE STAINS

CRAPPED DICK NOT WAKI COMPROMISE CD

"The trouble with being so bad... is that it feels so damn good," purrs Lydia Lunch, stretching her claws ever so slightly before going for the kill. Do the fabulously sounding five track EP she is poised by electric jazz福音 The Arubian Lights from Los Angeles, who supply the perfect

heliocentric sneaky listening soundtrack to accompany Lund's cabinet of cruelty. For Champagne, Cocaine & Nicotine Stains she revives her early Queen Of Siam persona, a sleek dominatrix creature of the night who possesses the power to destroy men with a single stare after suffering decades of abuse and humiliation. Lydia vocally weaves through this set of expertly balanced Nelson Riddle-styled dancemusic demolishes like a female mantis patiently waiting for the right moment to lash out and take your head clean off. It is also the best thing she has done for years and, hopefully, there is more of this collaboration in the can.

POPU VUH

FUTURE SOUND EXPERIENCE

MYSTIC MTS191 CD

Legendary Krautrock cosmonauts Popu Vuh return (brightly) with the remixed and remastered release of an obscure early 90s album. Their recently deceased leader Horst Fricke's trademark atmospheric synth choruses are intricately interwoven with wildlife samples and acoustic guitar embellishments, all of which gradually builds into a grand swell of Ambient orchestration. No wonder, then, that when fabled German film director Werner Herzog first heard Popu Vuh he decided to incorporate Fricke's compositions into *Aguirre: Wrath of God*, Nosferatu and *Cobra Verde* to act as the perfect soundtrack for his unwieldy cinematic visions. The immediately perceived association of Popu Vuh's music with Herzog probably irritates Fricke's more studious side, but that his post compositions continue to exude such an unpredictable, timeless sense of magic, mystery and nature through the decades is a remarkable accomplishment.

JOEY RAMONE

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME

SANCTUARY SAN103 CD

Although Joey Ramone's (sadly) perfunctory solo debut may lack the instant punk rawk crawl of The Ramones' classic first album, there are

enough memorable moments rippling through it to ensure that *Don't Worry About Me* will be around for a long time. Backed by a group that includes ex-Dictator Andy Shenoff on bass guitar, Frank Ferruccio and Mirry Rimmone on drums, plus brother Mickey Leigh sharing vocals, Joey hauls his way through a speedy set of originals and covers with the same streetwise bravado and impish sense of fun that he had when he was touring The Ramones. The real surprise here, however, has to be Joey's version of the Louis Armstrong hit, "What A Wonderful World", which unashamedly punches a celebratory fist of optimism into the air. The result is an anthem which gives the army of fans, friends and admirers he left behind a sense of new hope for the future. And what a wonderful world it really would be if Joey's swiveling managed to soar to the top of the singles chart.

TEENAGE FANCLUB &

JAD FAIR

WORDS OF WISDOM AND HOPE

GEORGIC GEOG14 CD

The not so odd coupling of ex-Hell Japanese manmam Jad Fair with west of Scotland indie rockers Teenage Fanclub has produced a powerful album of songs and music which both parties can deservedly be proud of. *Words Of Wisdom And Hope* goes back to the simpatico roots of Fair and TFC, a move which (after so many side projects) reaffirms their value as individual performers, musicians, artists and thinkers. On "Year To You" Fair squares up to a legion of famous movie heroes to prove that his love is real, sounding not unlike a teen Lou Reed. Elsewhere this solo affiliation joins forces with TFC's guitar riffing for "Crush On You", where the full force of this heavenly union suddenly ripples into action with a beat that echoes the hypnotic throb of The Velvets in full "What Goes On" ecstasy.

ZAPPATISTAS

LIVE IN LEEDS

MC2211 JPM122 CD

Frank Zappa died in LA on 4 December 1993. Since then his musical legacy has been kept alive by making previously unreleased archive material available and allowing various classical, rock and jazz groups to make their own personalized homages to his music. Guitard John Etheridge's octet Zappatistas are the latest in a (long) line of FZ tribute groups whose performance at the Worldwide in Leeds in November 1989 has been captured on this CD. To his credit, Etheridge has plucked an interesting selection of compositions from his hero's sprawling songbook to mangle – the opening medley of "Harry You're A Beast", "Dil No" and "Theme From Luny Gray" being particularly inspired – but to manufacture what may have been a cherished memory of the event for all concerned into a permanent keepsake was not a smart move. Although Zappatistas know all the jazz noises that make Zappa's music work, they seriously ignore the underlying psychiatric surrealism and social cynicism which made it special. ☺

Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

BEATLESS

LIKE SUGAR LIKE RAIN/
THE TRUTH REMIXES
UBIQUITY UB12044 12"

The duo of Alex Atlass and Telkin' Lou's Paul Martin previously released "Like Sugar Like Rain" on their LP *Life Mirrors*. It's an eerie mix of African percussion, keys and snaky bass, pushed into the ether by Colonial Red's spookily fleseted. Atlass's "Wardrobe Mix" carries away the flesh to reveal a shuddering, angular skeleton, and he matches it unkindly forward like some kind of broken beat Terminator. King Bratz's "Scuba Mix" of "The Truth Part Two" is much more polite, with the muffled pads and aquatic bass that characterize every Scuba outing, but there's something redeemerly rough in the loosely pasted together beats. In fact, it's probably the most kicky thing he's ever done, and that's a good thing. Still, it lacks direction, as though he descended to the seafloor and couldn't make up his mind which way to explore. Even the most experienced divers run out of air at some point, and as the track nears its eighth minute, you wish he'd just give a tug on the hose, already.

DAVID CARON

INCIDENT REPORT
MUSIC FOR SPEAKERS MFS101P 12"

This Dutch veteran of Mo'Wax and Exciteville mines a familiar vein of cushioned down-tempo, but he does it with grace and a confidently undelated voice. At times you wish he leaned a little less on the trash preset, but when he filters them like glossy, vintage New Order, you can't really argue. His dry, waxy textures just beg to be fingered, but at first contact they drop away to reveal fathoming sub-bass that shies uneasily like a stilled seismic fault. "Riot" is a fine track, effacing intricacy, arpeggiated bounce and dreamily-pastoral waltzes like Boards Of Canada, but "Incident Report #2" is the standout, with its hibernating two-step glide and positively optimistic chord progressions. It's not afraid to keep the chin up, and these days we could probably use as much of that as we can get.

DIVERSE

MOVE
CHOCOLATE INDUSTRIES CHL01018 CD

CAURAL

PAINT
CHOCOLATE INDUSTRIES CHL01044 CD

PUSH BUTTON OBJECTS

360° REMIXES

CHOCOLATE INDUSTRIES CHL01018 CD

Chocolate Industries returns from a brief hiatus with a new focus, shedding many of the IDM trappings of yore in favour of pure, undistorted Hip-Hop. The debut from Divine - Chicago's Kerri Jenkins, in cahoots with Ted Snore and Isotope 217's Matt Luu - pulls the plug in pursuit of a relaxed, organic sound. "Move" revolves around a piano line that sounds like a melancholic Vince Giordano, and it rocks with the simple anti-badass conveyed in straightforward lines like, "I got rhythm like a handshaker." "What I Do" uses a similarly lean piano loop, swelling

chords that seem to slide like oil slicked on the surface of water; the chorus disturbs the serenity with whacked scratching. "The Unrest" shelves the samples for live drums, bass and guitar, favouring chords that refuse to settle down. It may be unplugged, but there's a very intensity concealed in the track's sparse home.

Caron, on the other hand, effuses straight-up shoegazing, with more than a little My Bloody Valentine to their chord rustles and back-loaded piano, and samples of supposedly Shambler-esque pop songs. Along with contemporaneous Minstrel Shock and later, they're grafting the familiar beat-robot of leftfield electronica onto a more acoustic, pastoral frame. "Red Sunshine" falls somewhere between Fridge and Steve Reich, building an increasingly dense construction of strummed guitar and various acoustic loops. "Your Memoirs" on television" drifts an instant stare figure through the billowing toots of talk talk-like ooze and keys. Samples of blushing young women talking about "drawing on ourselves with markers" add an oddly erotic touch.

There's certainly nothing sexy about Push Button Objects' "360°", a compressed, ultra-stabby beat-scape littered by scratches from DJ Creme that fly by like paper bags being buffeted by bus exhausts, with Mr. Luu and DJ La Funky Homospiritus delivering dystopian prophecy from the street-corner. The remixes (by DJ Spinn, Purkiss 73, Kurt Mata Kurt, The Herbaliser and DJ-P) are hot with Spinn, Kurt and The Herbaliser trying to funk things up to no purpose. DJ-P and Purkiss-73, at least, seem to get the point even if their remixes don't quite match the original. (MFS review: Peter Shapiro)

EL-STEPFATHER FACTORY

DEP JUX D007 12"

"Ladies and gentlemen," says El-Step speaking as CEO of the stepfather factory, "I propose that the market is swining under the weight of the useless objects added to the shopping carts of all working families." But hold on wrapped around that radically commensurate aphorism is a modest proposal of dystopian dimensions, announcing "the age of familial industry: building tomorrow's fathers today." Plenty of pundits have agonised over the 'crisis of masculinity' affecting the Hip-Hop community, but El-P takes it on with Sivitan severity, underpinning his piss with characteristically pummeling beats and overdriven keyboards. As for the product, it runs on boost, so "pig it in, give it a name, man of the house, self-sustained, wearing the pants, you can make one of the pack, nuclear man - *Atomic nuclear*." This gives a whole new meaning to the phrase, "that shit's gonna blow up."

ART KONIK FINGER

COMET COMET002 12"

The Parisian percussionist and producer Nichoelle Gorge, aka Art Konik, has a handful of worthwhile 12"s to his name already, rewarded by requests West London talent like Stephane Atlass. But here, assisted by pianist Bobby Felt, he takes his sound much deeper into abstraction. Few builds

unstable towers out of blocked chords before knocking them down with a listless sweep of the hand, while Konik sets rolling congas in motion; a strangely phased triangle, as though sampled off melted cassette tape, chimes over the muted proceedings like a sick insect. The effect, oddly enough, is like a nu jazz rework of Marilyn Crispell's *Rhythms Hung in Undrawn Sky*.

MISS BOMBAY 1974

MAHATMATRONIC/
HINDUSTAN AMBASSADOR
MANTIS MANT016 12"

According to the press release, Geeta Chawla was the title of Miss Bombay 1974, released the single "Hindustan Ambassador" in 1975, toured for half a decade, then spined from showbusiness to run the Power Girls cosmetics company, before the same Swami Nitaban Lido brought her back into the studio last year to renew her "ethnodox class". The story, except Lido is something of a notorious prankster and numerous Internet searches failed to corroborate the story. In any case, the automotive anthem in question (the Hindustan Ambassador is a classic Indian knock-off of the Morris Oxford) finds Lido in mixed House mode, giving tribal on the congas and feathered handclaps, with grainy Indo-disco samples threading through the loose groove. The flip is like a dub of the same, full of the kind of slack breaks that make Music For Foxes so infectious.

RJD2

HERE'S WHAT'S LEFT
ALTERED IMAGES/BATTERSEA PARK MUSIC
AVM003/BPM003 12"

This could be the most affecting Hip-Hop record this year, the Columbus, Ohio producer's vintage soul is so lovely it takes your breath away. Like water over rocks, a cool Rhodes line rolls down over a dry, buffered beat, and a forlorn, uncredited vocal takes you back to every leave-back-all-righter you ever pulled. It's worlds away from the comparatively hard-edged production of Def Jux, for whom he's putting together his debut LP. The B-side's a little more what you would expect, with a giddy piano holding down a jinked soul jam, smothered with greasy horns and then wiped clean. Hell, even the bassless beat is worth having here: looping horns and piano like a rougher Pete Rock.

SOUL DESIGNER

EP1
F COMMUNICATIONS F148 12"

Belgian's Fabrice Ligout isn't worried about masking his influences. The first track is called "Detroit Sound", and built from a squeaking, analogue bassline, for choral washes and jittery, breakbeat-reverbed percussion, that's exactly what you get. Still, Lig knows how to work a formula to positive effect. "Deep In My Heart", with its squiggy high end, and wise waaapeeeeble percussion, sounds a lot like Morgan Geist, as does the cheezy, ridant "12 Months Of Happiness", with chords so rich they're the musical equivalent of fire gas. As does the closing "Smile, Light And Shadows", for that

matter. Make no doubt, it's a genre record, but then, what isn't these days?

SUPERSOUL SOUND CLASH

MEDIEVINKIN M021012 12"

Feedback guitar whammy lines up the latest slice of weendo Hip-Hop from Miami's Diner Clemenson, and it's among his best work yet. A slew of MCs - Sham, Dynae, Judith Marson - drop battle rhymes, and Miami chanteuse Julee delivers a wistful refrain reminiscent of Tracy's collaboration of you that should raise the hair on your neck. But the genius here is in Clemenson's production, assisted by Push Button Objects and whiz scratches courtesy of The Alles' DJ Inferno: lurching beats that stagger around like one, bound from state, cowering bleep bleeps and Hammonds trembling like nervous antennae. SuperSoul's a pointillist, but every dot placed with the precision of a jet, wobbling fast, his tracks display the kind of meanness that bong out the meaow in you. Fat Jon's remix, meanwhile, gets all mushy with Days Of Our Lives-ready piano licks and a jiggly slow-jam stunner, but the off-key bits stabs off complacency.

VARIOUS

MINT CONDITION 1: MINTSTYLE
MINT CONDITION MINT001 12"

Almost against my better judgement, this compendium from the Mint Condition crew has quickly become one of my favourite two-step records. Some of the souals are almost unearthy cheezy - Magic Funk's "Dreamer" offers a vocoded refrain over tony arpeggios that wouldn't sound out of place on a HI-NRG record. But dig a little deeper and you'll find Mintson produces Zean & DBX (not the Detroit bleep producer) grinding out rough-hewn breakdowns, howeving bass stabs and angular one-buzz and raggip snippets. The keys have that truncated artificality of the days when producers hadn't yet learned to craft a proper waveform, and it all sounds like a less-frenetic take on Basement Jaxx's brand of earnest cheese. Almost all of the elements are well past their sell-by date, but grafted onto snappy Breaks-Step rhythms, they come off as a brilliant tribute to the surprising resilience of ostensibly disposable dancefloor culture.

VELOCETTE JULY & AUGUST - 4/4 DUB-A-MIN.D.

PARALLEL RECORDINGS PR1031 10"

Jason Williams delivers two tightly wound, propulsive tracks that twist up time - they're late 2001 productions, but they draw heavily on early to mid-90s Techno motifs. "July & August" skips along as though running over ran-slicked rip-rap. Williams's meadow-like construction constitutes to the stony feel; every synopsized tone is tinted a different shade of the same basic colour. For all the organic metaphor, though, the track's elements are planted solidly in Detroit Techno's electronic soil. On "Ain't It Cool", Acid rains down and carves deep grooves in the shape of rolling 303 lines, running out in the rivulets reminiscent of DBX's bleep tracks. □

Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

THE BUG VS THE ROOTSMAN FEATURING HE-MAN

KILLER/VERSION

RAZOR X VINYL RECORD 7"

Named after the radical flick featuring the late Peter O'Toole, this label, bearing the legend "Made In Babylon", sets high expectations. Kevin Martin, the half of Techno Animal that is The Bug, has talked John Rootsmen into liberating the vocals from the multitracks of selected DJ collaborations. He-Man's vocals on "Killin'", already a track of springtime venom, now comes cloaked with a garge of gravel in 100 per cent proof rum on top of a rhythm to which the word "beat" cannot be applied. A crunching, heaving, brittle, metallic lurch of a things, particularly on the version where a crippling distortion applied to the DJ brings a modicum of relief to the unrelenting sonic violence.

BOBBY DIGITAL/VARIOUS FLAG FLOWN HIGH: THE BEST OF BOBBY DIGITAL'S ROOTS PRODUCTIONS

MAXIMUM PRESSURE MP001 CD

The new label Maximum Pressure is a joint venture between Pressure Sounds, DJ-U Sound's sister label dedicated to the retrieval of classic reggae, and Frenchy's Maximum Sound imprint which, up to now, has focused on contemporary dancehall sounds issued on a 7" single format. First up is a set destined to become a modern classic: Biggy Digital was a graduate from Prince Jammy's Waterhouse academy of sound and these take date from the decade following his departure from his mentor's studio in 1969. Flag Flown High compiling not only some of the best of Biggy Digital's classic productions for his own Digital B label, but also a clutch of unreleased cuts such as the starting opener from the late Gemini Silk, "Mystic Chant", which utilises a loop from Jam-Bob's "Natural Mystic" for its rhythm bed. No sleekness to be found here of course, and for all Shabba Ranks's non-PC pedigree his "Heart Of A User", a pean to ghetto youth, is reggae at its most committed, powerful and compelling. Amongst the 18 tracks are contributions from Yami Bolo, Sista, Coco Tea, Morgan Heritage, Capleton and more. Uplifting

DERRICK HARRIOTT PRESENTS SCRUB-A-DUB

CRYSTAL DH448 12"

The albums most often quoted as "classic early dub" are Keph Hudson's Pick A Dub and Herman Chin Loy's Aquana Dub. In the last few years both of these have become available once more, after long absences from the catalogue. Also deserving of induction in this iconic category are the early instrumental club albums by Dennis Rionton who was already a successful artist, producer and businessman by the time the dub sound became predominant in the mid to late 70s. Whether you know the tunes or not this is a great dub album. Harrriott's treatment of "Shanty" reminds the old link chanted in a reggae style, and like many of the instroclub albums from around the time the "leaky" channels on the mixing desk allowed in ghostly remnants of

dropped voices and players makes the whole thing even more beguiling.

LOBE

RADIANT DUB SYSTEM AFTER BEFORE AF031 CD

Federico Lunasa has morphed from the stretched ambience of MicroMegas through Webcom, his solo dubby jazz project for Noise Makers, into this newer, more talkoblastic form as Lobe. It's largely bass driven, with no soot for the hay longer that occasionally graced his previous work. Once past the Clangers tattoral phase on "Fuga", more dubby references begin to appear on "Janinale", and although "When Jupiter Aligns With Mars" sounds like a reference to Kite, it's more Hendrix versus Sosoliso. Lunasa is still in experimental mode and almost there.

BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS TRENCHTOWN ROCK

TRICORN TTD0016 2XCD

Probably the most aggressively marketed reggae artist in history, Marley's legacy has burned up in more jackets than anyone can count by now. Still, this collection covering the early period 1969-70 contains some of The Wailers' least affected and most ecstatic tracks, many of them early takes that would later turn up recorded during the Island years. The pleading quality of Marley's voice has not yet succumbed to the earnestness of his later years, and the more pop orientated productions of Lee Perry and Bunny Lee are strikingly present. (Bob Young)

AUGUSTUS PABLO

THIS IS AUGUSTUS PABLO

ABOVE ROCK ARM2001 CD

The late melodic tooter's final album, dating back to 1974, is back on the streets again – and worth noting because this is among the best music Pablo ever put out. Produced by Clive Chin and originally released on the Tropical label, this is a collection of instruments on which Pablo demonstrates his keyboard skills on piano, organ and clavinet as well as his beloved melodica. Recorded at Ranks', the mix and master engineer is Eric Thompson, the earlier rebel Far East flavoured rock hit "Java" is included, and there are three certified studio classics in "Dub Organise", "Dread Eye" and "Gauding Red". This album makes sense of all that follows in this musician's extraordinary catalogue.

LEE PERRY & FRIENDS

A LIVE INJECTION: ANTHOLOGY 1968-1979

TRICORN TTD005 CD

Back to Portland, white, as always, all is not as it seems. Appearing more or less at the same time as the woeiful Jamaican ET, and on the same label, here are 44 succinctly stated reasons why the most prolific and prolific of Jamaican artists has a right to be adored. This anthology is part of the research of the Irgan catalogue following its absorption into the independent empire that is the Castle organisation, with other double retrospective sets equally worthy of attention coming from Gregory Isaacs, Ken

Boode, the Ethiopians and Toots & The Maytals. The Perry compilation runs from 1969 – the height of Perry's popularity amongst the young UK mod contingent – to 1979, by which time he had achieved even higher heights with the vibrating womb that was the Black Ark. It would be churlish to quibble over the selection on this set, which is about as good as you are going to get, minus early ska sides and some of the Island stuff, and, of course, anything containing Carlton & The Stars. "Senior Day" is worth having. Excellent arwos and sleeve notes bode well for the new regime at Irgan. Meanwhile, for a beginners guide to Scratch, start right here.

BRENDA RAY

DREAMIN'/ANOTHER DREAM

TAMON WAMBISSI TW0016 7"

Brenda Ray will be familiar to observers of the Liverpool scene as part of the NAAFI organisation, who dubbed it up consistently through the 80s, and also as Brenda & The Beachballs. Over the past few years, together with cohort The Minister Of Noise, she has been aiding and abetting the Spanish love postmaster and artist/producer Roy Cousins, once of The Royals, in his programme of remastering and reissuing selections from his Tamon Wambris imprint. This 7" is purportedly pressed up at Jamhouse; if so, the vinyl and presser must have been impressed as the finished product has no pits or scratches at all. All the better for Brenda to exercise her love of the R&B genre, specifically its breathy doo-wop manifestations, in this sensuously infectious cut which could translate easily into a leftfield dancehall favourite. Perversely, the flip is not a dub of the vocal, but a different tune altogether.

LEROY SMART

MIRROR MIRROR

FE-METIME FM151 12"

This classic 7" makes a welcome reappearance. The fearless Leroy Smart was a vocal star of choice for producer Jimmy Ivan "Ivan" Rodney As to be expected, here he does not enrage, but rather threatens the mirror on the wall, on what otherwise would be a rather cheery tune. The club, as with all Rodney's clubs, is slick A1, with superb chunky mix and classy brass action.

TOSCA

DIFFERENT TASTES OF HONEY

GTONE G02 4X12"

In true version-to-version fashion, Venuese duo Tosca – aka Richard Dorfmeyer and Rupert Huber – weigh in with 13 tastes of "Honey" across eight sides of vinyl. After the bass drives from *The Solo Surfer* (Markus Kient), where the source remains identifiable, the other removers begin to take the track further out. Face Aton scissor-kick the rhythm with rapid stabs. Brazilian percusion, smooth out the vocal samples and drop in a block style breakbeat, whereas Biggie Bush (ex-Rockies Hi-Fi man Glen Bush), chooses a jazzy Reggae Groove after a human beatbox intro and later what sounds like a Big Youth sample for flavour. Top for effort though is Germany's Supatone, aka Michael Baumann, who has learned how to phrase wah-

wah and percussion with an admirable restraint and creates enough space in the second of his duos to let a wondering mind do the rest. Dorfmeyer obviously loves his dub, and this is no dub the way it should be.

VARIOUS

BY SPECIAL REQUEST

HEARTBEAT HB7229 CD

18 tunes selected from the Treasure Isle vaults of Duke Reid by Heartbeat's Chris Wilson with a well judged mix of rare and rare tunes. So, although by no means a "classic" collection, this turns out to be a good thing as there are too many shoddy products currently claiming to represent the work of this particular producer which recycle the same old tracks, albeit great ones. Collectors and enthusiasts will pick up to find The Victors' "You Can't Stop Me" with its DJ version by the mysterious Dynamic Man, "Boss Boss"; and there's a rare Jason Hinds tune "Time Pass By". Other appearances from such vintage stalwarts as Tommy McCook, U Roy, Dennis Alcapone, Ken Parker, John Holt and The Techniques means this release, like most from this label, can be purchased with confidence.

VARIOUS

THE GROOVE CORPORATION PRESENTS REMIXES FROM THE ELEPHANT HOUSE

GUIDANCE GRODANCE CO

Birmingham meets Chicago in a dub remix showdown. Over the past few years Groove Corporation have been busy on the remix duties and here they partner with Guidance in a Blood & Fire Select Cuts style. Although some of the tracks look unlikely candidates – isn't it everyone agreed that it's not a good idea to remix Marley & The Wailers unless you travel back in time to the Black Ark and pull in a DJ from Tippermore HI-FI do we really need another attempt at "Cosine In My Brain" – others work well enough to rescue this concept. The tracks that work best feature the less obvious source material like Baby Womack's "Across 110th Street" and Ennio Morricone's "Giacosa, Giacosa".

VARIOUS

READY WHEN YOU READY

SMUGG GLUM500307 CD

As the rousseau focus is now moving from roots to the digital era, there is potential for the intervening dancehall period to be lost in the process of revision. Although DJ Lee tended to be mainly of the tedious bong-diddly-bong-bong variety, dancehall brought a lot of younger vocalists with attitude into the studio and helped refine the careers of those older singers who were prepared for the test. Smugg picks up a bunch of tunes from the Upstamp vaults of Sugar Minott and Steve King which all date from this 1st period, consisting mostly of cuts from top vocalists – Horace Andy, Freddie McWay, Barrington Levy, junior Red, Johnny Osbourne and Frankie Paul – but none surpasses the harky brassy opener from the late Teror Sow, "Golden Hen". A dub set is promised shortly with mixes from Tubby and Chemist. □

HipHop

Reviewed by Dave Tompkins

BEATNUTS

CLASSIC NUTS VOL 1

LOUD LNR006 CD

It's funny how Beatnuts once rapped about record shopping, "I know a lot of spuds I ain't put you up on/Find your own beats, Shitfuggapups", since children's educational records like *Sing! The Hit Songs Of Sesame Street* couldn't be further from the Beatnut slogan: "We wanna fuck, drink and smoke some shit". Deep loops have always been the first last of choice image Psycho Los, Ju-Ju and Fashion (and now solo), a sonic sensibility that made them 'right as hell' now and tootie shooop humour seem like hamfisted afterthoughts. Included here are early classics like "Reign Of The Tech" and "Poppa Over Here". On "Off The Books", Big Pun is "making kids run" and not hearing between words as he on his tragic last gasp was on. The two cuts that go to Greg Nice for the type man hook shot are too many. Misusing is "Psycho Owl" of the red sticker, and don't look now because "Are You Ready?" is nowhere to be found. The latter is a classic because it pays the dolt enough to vocalise a Big Dugget baseline and uses the voice at the beginning of the intro flip of Fantasy 3's monument, "Bitter In The City": "What we gan' do right here is...". Not much, because as ecab0!

BLACKALICIOUS

MAKE YOU FEEL THAT WAY/ PARAGRAPH PRESIDENT

MCA MCAR016112 12"

Coming spring, "Make You Feel That Way" will make me miss having wheels, but then again, that's one less daydreaming road menace you have to worry about. The trumpet is pretty enough to stop traffic, the beat skips from bumper to hood with UMC mirth while you stand at the bird crap on your windshield, wondering how the strings make all so haunting. "When I'm gone more likely you'll notice me," says Gab, already out the window reliving many endzone dances and saving the deaf, dumb and blind. Inspired by a De La line, a demo version of "Paragraph President" first appeared on *Soledaze* 91 mixtape, Radio So!, along with a live recording of "Word Of Mouth". On this upgrade, X-Cel solidifies words with piano and Gab's "cold" cleaning clothes, nothing left for the janitor. That's the most tactless custodian from a Richard Matheson story, the one with the third eye that's the back of his head who turns houses into spaceshipships.

JEL

10 SECONDS

MUSH M-0205 CD

Those hopeless MCs in So Solid Crew may need 21 seconds to rock the mic, but any real HipHop head knows you only need ten to move the crowd. Named after the amount of sampling time available on the ultimate HipHop instrument, under Ol' producer-for-Jel's leftist joint is an extended love letter to the SP-1200 sampler (the track titles are even named after the function buttons and knobs on the machine). As journalist Oliver Wang points out in his sleeve notes, any SP-1200 beat is dirty and crusty, even if it's an Olivia Newton-John loop

you're running through it, making it a funk instrument on a par with a wheezy Hammond and an 'or the Int'l' wuh-wuh pedal. On 10 Seconds Jel displays these qualities admirably, while also indulging in the SP-1200's penchant for a detached, faded emotional, elegiac quality that Ol' Shadow first coaxed from the sampler's decay and truncate functions and as drum machine-like pads. (Peter Shapiro)

MARVELOUS THREE

RAPPIN' ALL OVER

BRASS RECORDINGS BRS0006 12"

Baby Bee's Old School phrase "Yester your socks" is important because you don't want those tubes to stick stiff and do The Walk without you. Terry Lewis produced this 1980 gem featuring the Chief Rocker himself. While Baby may be wonking from Noc Deel's infamous smile ("put that bawdy-bawdy-bawful on 'Aid"), his '92 Jay and Diamond was surprisingly good when most of his peers had scored. On "Rappin' All Over" the congas are clapping' as Baby Bee comes to earth on a metronome, takes Al Scotch to a special meet and gives him the power to rhyme. The Marvelous third is Son of Hollywood Ol' Smash, another park legend who later recorded "We're Getting Paid" for HBO Records. If all this means nothing to you, and pioneer-signed rap is not your bag, the disco-funk instrumental is long enough to make you do the Pata. Until you yoke.

MISTER CEE

MISTER CEE PRESENTS BROOKHAM'S FINEST FREESTYLES

TAPE KMGZ CEE168 12"

While it's hard to duck the "boh, irony" feeling, Ol' Mister Cee captures Biggie and Piss sharing the stage and ill-fated notions of invincibility. Biggie brags about his tons of guns and cracks a cap on Doktown's 357, MC Hammer's spandex halftime group. The clear version of Biggie freestyles would be useless except the blank edit spaces can be spliced together and dubbed over Big Snook's wack rhymes and the sicker can lamest Big Daddy Kane's dance being allowed on the mix and this record. Kane has some space: "I only know one nigga that could come next to me/You're that niggah that could count my own shadow". A young Jay-Z and Jaz do their flyboy triplet style that Kane helped pioneer. On the B-side, Cee throws on a Headjazzy/cello instrumental and Biggie also, "Who you choose: the wack MC or the black fat MC?" and creates a new lyrical species the Black-skinned hypostates. Meanwhile, the preposterous Busta Rhymes sings leftovers from Leaders' second album: Spend a money on a Maserati and have a friend dub you Best Of Biggie, an essential tape of names back when it was all a dream.

NEW FLESH

UNDERSTANDING

BIG DADA 80001 CD

It might be worth noting the date in your diary for future reference: two great British HipHop records in the same issue (see P Brothers

below). While the P Brothers succeed by literally reproducing every detail of Fort Apache in the Midlands, New Flesh's Part 2, Teesie Taylor and Juicy Almond get over by creating just about the most unique HipHop record to hail from these shores. You couldn't convince Primo, PUFF, Or One or Timbaland to get anywhere near the beats on Understanding, and that's the record's strength. Instead of obsequing over Yankee styles, beamster Part 2 totally ignores any of HipHop's competing orthodoxies, festooning beats and atmospheres that have to do with Denim Mack, Larry Head, Dave Kiley, Wookie and solo monach Sugar Blue that are the sum of bop or bring that has ossified into "HipHop". Teesie and Juicy's lyrics similarly follow their own vapour trail through the rap compass: while "Loose mousse about a dancing Queen Elizabeth and 'cogies dancing/mimy", Juicy Almond manages to rescue something worthwhile from Dennis Hirst's épater la bourgeoisie sketch: "See me now, chopping a holy cow for arf's sake/Assesante, they hung me in the Tate/Holes through the back of my neck...carcasses avans' showdown/higher this firepoover, moving them all down/Defiant giant doing, drive-by in a Robin Reliant". (Peter Shapiro)

P BROTHERS

NOTTINGHAM BRONX EP

HEAVY BRONX H005 12"

Romancing the BX can be disheartening when Experience Music Project is using big bank to Microsoft through the L Brothers' closet for Old School flicks. But P Brothers, Paul 5 and Ivory, mean it, whether interviewing Johnny Juice for Big Daddy or brandishing the motto, "Fuck fashion give me loud drums", on their monastically preserved Tyster sleeves. On the title cut, the beat shadows slugs with Ultra's "Feeble" until the end when it throws on an aruck boots and bounces all over the village. MC Cappo is there for every stomp, spring in the mukuloks, Timbaland's beats may be awestruck but it's good to hear someone just beat the fawk out of some drums and honour backdoor stabs. Cappo then pops bubble letters on "Rock The City": "Watch the words expand and blow apart". And what is more life-affirming than a Vocoder space? "We're dealing with a lot of science motherfucker?" The dug/funk fury in the trailer of J Bagger's "Mum" makes us happy RA. Hitched it up to The Wiz's monster nucleus ("Soul Power") so Flava Flav could sizzle some fatback in the flattened, like a rock.

VARIOUS

AFRICA RAPS

TRIDENT U8994 CD

If they don't make their way to the sidewalk merchants plying their trade on Broadway and Fulton Street in New York, major label cassette that don't pass quality control seemingly get shipped to the West's damping ground, West Africa. In 1991 that meant a surfet of Phil Collins, One Shatta and Madmora tapes mastered at the worst speed on creaking around the markets in Dakar and Bamako. Luckily for

the inhabitants of Senegal and Mali, this practice now means that they are drowning in Jay-Z, Or One, MC Solaar and NFM. Africa Raps is the first major survey of African HipHop and amply illustrates the pleasures and difficulties of syncretism. Perhaps inevitably, the biggest tracks back home are the ones that most successfully appropriate American and French styles; and more inevitably, these are the tracks that will fal on deaf ears abroad. The most interesting tracks to Western ears are probably Gekh-B System's "Kasse" (ironically produced by an American), Dyllid's "Mitti", Tari Poudit's "Bessal" (made under the auspices of the radical jedi Toumani Sow), Les Ecrits' "Pavies" and Positive Black Soul's crust cover of Orchestre Bobabola's "Bou Ma Minha", all of which work traditional music into their beats somehow making kios and ergols float within HipHop's egot rhythm matrix. (Peter Shapiro)

X-ECUTIONERS

LET IT BANG/X/L

LOUD LNP4543 12"

If MDP's voices were pitted against P Brothers' drums, we'll have what my fifth grade fractions teacher Mrs Hassell would call "cross cancellation". Freshly pissed off from a "please god, no collaboration with LFO" (no, not that LFO, but the odious Lyre Funkis Goss), Ufame and Billy Ozon search for vengeance over Metal guitar blasts and enough tom-tom extremes to earn the X-Men their own X-shaped podium at Shattonch 3000. On the A capella, somebody screams, "Where's the beat?" The beat is chased out the building by maniacal laughter, some blammy blams and even more scratching to dash your dead air hopes — like one of those deceptive late 80s A capellas, where warm-up stabs are left in to give you a false sense of the beat-drop butterflies. On the flip, Large Professor stalks through the gamboole with a Queens authority, armed with lone acoustic guitar and his favorite Chuck Brown record.

YOUNGER GENERATION

WE RAP MORE MELLOW

BRASS RECORDINGS BRS0004 12"

In 1979, when I was listening to RED Speedwagon, a sticker was slapped on this record accurately boasting "9 1/2 minutes of rapper rapname". Younger Generation is Ol' Flash & The Furious Five, pre- "Superstar". The group sounds like a funky Pumpkin arrangement, but again there's Terry Lewis, doing the time bender. On this essential reboot, the future Funkus pissa Flash but Flash doesn't do anything because he was busy lunging for his copy of Chantal Curtis's harmonic classic, "Get Another Love" — the basslines are practically disco twiss, born the same year at a similar chugging guitar pace. Mr Ness will always be Scroopocider and Melle, the deej-tarbil, known as his tell-beat boan. The late great Cowboy, man with a bow-legged voice, took his personally past the Village People outcasts and went on the outside. "7 ride in the rag until it's time to play a barbecue of the bogaloo". Mr the buffalo room when I pass through". □

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Bill Shoemaker

BERESFORD/THOMAS/WESTON

3 PIANOS
EMANON 4054 CD

From the placement of the pianos in an equilateral triangle to the almost Pythagorean ratios of rules based pieces and freely improvised trios and duos, 3 Pianos is a finely designed programme. The overall tone of the music is much closer to recent formality than pub jazz spunk. Still, there are more clusters and interior sounds made by any one of the pianists on this disc than is heard in a decade in any concert hall. The full force of Steve Beresford, Pat Thomas and Vernon Weston would be given short shrift if compared to a Nancarrow piano roll or The Piano Chor, and their subtle cohesion would be diminished by suggestions of compositional gravity. Time will tell, but this has the makings of a real watershed.

BERGMAN/BAUER/MANERI

THE RIVER OF SOUNDS
ROCKHOLDER 89482 CD

Boash Bergman is occasionally mistaken for two or more pianists. His left hand can play dazzlingly complex materials as dexterously and powerfully as many pianists' hands. His equally formidable hands are also completely independent, capable of spooling out two thickly spool threads simultaneously. While his skills are in ample evidence on *The River Of Sounds*, he repeatedly shuns them up with his comping, prodding violinist Mat Manen (who plays an electric six string violin throughout the disc) to jettison his laconic lyricism in favour of heated bowing, and trombonist Conny Bauer to dispense with his well-etched motives and bellow unrelentingly. Given the overlaid, the passages of pristine calm between storms are a balm. Although dotted with tranquil eddies, *The River Of Sounds* has enough rapids to capsize the unprepared listener.

JEB BISHOP TRIO/QUARTET

AFTERNOONS
OKKADISK 001/20329 CD

Trombonist Jeb Bishop is arguably the most perspicuous composer in the Chicago scene orbiting around Kent Vandermark. Brimming with solid tones and spirited interplay, *Afternoons* finds Bishop refining his smart amalgamation of post-JJ Johnson vocabularies and reinforcing the savvy rapport he has established with bassist Kent Kessler and drummer Tim Mulvenna. Guitarist Jeff Parker fits in well on four tracks, adding dollops of slyness and streaks of streamlined jazz pastilles.

ANTHONY BRAXTON 5 EIGHT COMPOSITIONS (QUINTET) 2001

CIMP 445 CD

Lastly, Anthony Braxton's *Ghost Dance Music* has been under a steady barrage from otherwise sympathetic critics. "Fuddling" is the most frequent charge lodged against the GM's unison lines of evenly accented, equally valued notes. *Eight Compositions* (Quintet) 2001

places the GM within the rhythmic context of African percussion, which, combined with the progressively integrated phrase shapes of Youth species GM, results in music that breathes fully and consciously sweet. Drummers Sigro Robert Bellinger, Alvin Benjamin Carter Sr and his son, Alvin Jr., are attentive to the contours of the materials while layering strata of traditional rhythms. The interaction between Braxton and saxophonist-neautist Richard A. McGhee III is more flexible and conversational than the larger horn sections on previous GM recordings. McGhee is an intriguing presence, whose maturity is evident in the subdued roughness of his tenor and the well-honed fluidity of his soprano. Braxton simmers congenitally with his 94 Lee duets with Ghanaian drum master Abraham Adymah. In demonstrating the GM's relationship to African music, Braxton has opened a new point of entry into the phase of its work.

TOBIAS DELIUS 4TET PELIKANISMUS

ICP 036 CD

Few groups encapsulate the gregariousness and the exasperation of New Dutch Swing like Tobias Delius' 4Tet. The leader's tenor saxophone can invoke the inact speed tempi of drummer Han Bennink, the ratty jungle swashes and madcap singlings of cellist Triston Horsinger and the ominous lurching of bassist Joe Williamson into an infectious groove. Conversely, Delius' clarinet can cleave the same elements to create a bracing discontinuity. Recorded over a three day clubstand, *Pelikanismus* documents how they can whip up nicely swinging tunes and restring, fragmented improvisations with the same disarming offhandedness. Live! DeLies, Bennink, Horsinger and Williamson somehow create an overarching festivity from these occasionally disorderly materials, a phenomenon this album vividly captures.

JOHNNY DYANI &

MAL WALDRON DUO
SOME JIVE ASS BOER

JAZZ UNITE 102 CD

The plumpness of exiled South African Johnny Dyani's bass was a fine foil for the mid-register, jabbing chords and wiry blare lines of pianist Mal Waldron on this 1981 Paris performance. The programme is formulaic: vamping-anthemed tunes at the top, a Dyani lassay in *Xhosa* traditional singing, a handballed jazz waltz, a slow blues and a drama-spiked finale to take it off. Still, there is a chemistry between Waldron's refined fire and Dyani's freely vented outrage and passion that produces some compelling moments. *Some Jive Ass Boer* is a timely reminder that jazz is at its most vital when it is an instrument of protest.

EMERY/LOVANO/SILVANO/GRESS

FOURTH WORLD

BETWEEN THE LINES 000/FA0010 CD

Joe Lovano deserves credit for thinking outside the box constructed for him by the jazz industry

and for progressively nudging the median point of its sanctimonious mainstream, of which Fourth World is the latest and perhaps most perturbant example. Although the set was penned by guitarist James Emery, this is a collective effort, exuding an organic feel corporate jazz is clueless about. Able anchored by bassist Drew Gress, the quartet are equally cogent on numerous ballads and Brazilian-tinged vehicles as they are on rocking cutabout themes and jagged, stop-go motives. Green Emery's use of electric and acoustic instruments, Joe Lovano's arsenal of horns and percussion (he plays seismologic Paul Motian-like drums) and Judi Silvano's voice and flute, the quartet have a considerable palette, which is occasionally emphasised through overblowing. Still, Fourth World has the bite of a long hang in a loft or farmhouse, far away from the maddening industry.

GERJSTAD/STEVENS/BALIY

HELLO GOODBYE
EMANON 4666 CD

Drummer John Stevens and alto saxophonist Frode Gjerstad enjoyed a nearly 15 year collaboration, whose centerpiece was *Delat*, an excent the whose bass clef was filled by Johnny Dyani and Kent Carter. Gjerstad's extrapolation of Dimeite Coleman's streaming phrases and shifting tonal centers were compatible with Stevens's limber, connective play, an approach, arguably, as inspired by Billy Higgins as any New Thing drummer. The Norwegian saxophonist also shared Stevens's strong countertenor streak, resulting in challenging improvisations. Their rapport is alternately supported and disrupted to rewarding ends by guitarists Derek Bailey on this 92 gig recording. Bailey repeatedly uses large passing chords, volume pedal-activated streaks of sound and other tactics to slice across Gjerstad's phrases and Stevens's quasi patterns (which are beaked up by a standard jazz kit), creating a bracing tension. At other times, Bailey is swept up by Gjerstad's nimble lines and Stevens's fluid crossrhythms, adding space, almost graceful poise and jazzy strummed chords. If the measure of improvised music recordings is how musicians are continually challenged by each other and the moment, Hello Goodbye meets it head on.

GUY/CRISPPELL/LYTTON

INTAKT 070 CD

Much has been made of pianist Marilyn Crispell's turn towards deep lymph in recent years. Inthgang!; the compositions of bassist Berry Guy make greater demands on the aspect of her work than even Annette Peacock's. *Odyssey* confirms that Guy is a harder composer to peg, as he can effortlessly shift from the earnest folksy feel of the title piece to the tumult of "Rage" without Peacock's arch longing and lamenting. Crispell is also called on to extrapolate Guy's charts of such London Jazz Composers Orchestra chestnuts as "Hermes". Her performances are, in turn, magisterial and poignant, galvanising Guy's often stagging

output and percussionist Paul Lytton's offbeating textures into a thoroughly absorbing the music.

MARK HELIAS'S OPEN LOOSE NEW SCHOOL

DNA 000134 CD

On *New School*, the Open Loose ensemble places a greater emphasis on bassist and leader Mark Helias's quick-witted, improvisation-friendly extended compositions. Helias shrewly implants perspective-shifting turns of phrase and structural twists into his tunes, which new tenor saxophonist Melody is very adept in exploiting in his solos. He sits a bit more towards the post-jean Coltrane trajectory than his predecessor, Elley Eskelin, but he is inventive and has a clear head on Helias's compositional aims and is obviously spaited by Helias and drummer Tom Rainey's quirky teamwork.

STEVE LEHMAN QUINTET STRUCTURAL FIRE

CIMP 245 CD

Saxophonist Steve Lehman's strong debut as a leader sets him apart from the other Wesleyan University affiliated saxophonists who have matriculated through Anthony Braxton's recent ensembles. Lehman requires only a couple of tracks on *Structural Fire* to demonstrate a thorough distillation of Braxton's pre-Ghost Dance Music quartet material. The bulk of his programme, however, exceeds the outbound暴躁 advanced jazz articulated in the early 60s by another Lehman mentor, Jackie McLean. If the inspired play of veteran trumpeter Roy Campbell is any measure, Lehman's compositions are riveting, diamond-hard alto lines have a tough-mindedness well beyond his twentysomething years. The spats flying from the frontise repeatedly ignite guitarist Kevin O'Neill, bassist John Robert and drummer Kevin Norton, resulting in incendiary music.

WOODY SHAW LIVE VOLUME TWO

LIVE NOTE 17082 CD

Any serious investigation of attempts in the 70s to make a genuine people's music of advanced jazz must end with the late trumpeter Woody Shaw. Recorded at the apex of his tragically shortened career, this second volume of 1977 performances confirm Shaw's status as a paradigm-shifting virtuoso and a composer of breathtakingly demanding pieces that nevertheless left the listener with something to hum. Leading this firing-on-all-cylinders sextet (trombonist Steve Turre, saxophonist Camar Jefferson, pianist Larry Willis, bassist Stafford James and drummer Victor Lewis), Shaw simply tears through the set's four tunes, not even slowing the pace for a potentially schmalzy standard such as "What Is This Thing Called Love?". The wonder of Shaw's brinksmanship consists in its sheer musicality; his sleek sense of thematic development and knock for delivering a knockout punch at the end of a solo remind you how his sad decline and demise predict the rise of Wynton Marsalis. □

Modern Composition

Reviewed by Andy Hamilton

JOHN CAGE

CREDO IN US., MORE WORKS FOR PERCUSION

WENDO WENKST CO

The German label's estimable Edman John Cage continues with a second offering from percussion group Quartet Höller. Their present sense of Cage's earliest pieces, including two of the *Imaginary Landscapes*, reckoned to have opened the era of electronic music, No. 2, featuring two photographs, giving unusual sounds, cymbals and piano, is one of his most haunting creations: the hectic No. 3 has echoes of Edgard Varèse's *Ionisation*. *Credo in US* from 1942 begins absurdly with an extract from a 'major Romantic' orchestral recording selected by the performers, and the contrast between recordings, rattling percussion and blousy piano is hilarious; blits is almost environmental art – the sounds of water gurgling through shards, crotchet shells and crackling fire, and eventually a trumpet blast. Here Cage works with the unpredictability of nature – sometimes shell water gurgles when you tip the crotchet, sometimes not. The title of *But What About the House Of Complete Poetry*, from 1965, for speaker, con-resonant percussion, quotes the commissioning letter Cage received from the Arp Foundation.

SYLVIE COURVOISIER & JACQUES DEMIERRE

DEUX PIANOS

INTART 004 CD

Intart continues its exceptional standard of releases with the latest collaboration between two Swiss pianists who are longtime partners. Courvoisier is now resident in New York, and composes in both contemporary classical and jazz fields, working with Mark Feldman, Joëlle Léandre and Ikuo Mori, while Demierre has mainly pursued European improvisers. Their brief, often spare duet pieces are abstract yet characterful, frequently using interior piano sounds. A higher effect is aimed for on *Etoile*, with its macabre tolling on plucked strings.

GILLES GOBEIL

... DANS LE SILENCE DE LA NUIT...

EMPREINTES DIGITALES IMED0166 CD

The world of electroacoustic composition is populated with competitors, suggesting a degree of introversion, and it seems that Montreal's Gilles Gobéil has won lots of them. *Dans Le Silence...* is a typically loosely structured IMED product. Often violent industrial and natural environmental textures are replete with sudden gestures of closure – a door slams, followed by atmospheric or resonated silence. Sounds tend to be non-repeating – no industrial ostinati – and there's also a certain amount of spoken material, in French.

ROBERT HELPS

NEW MUSIC FOR THE PIANO

CRI ARCHIV-H 074 CD

Given the wealth of material in the CRI vaults, this compilation of piano music performed by Robert Helps hardly looks essential. Meant to be

new in 1966, almost all the pieces date from the 50s. The 21 composers represented – mostly American and up-to-date – fall into three predictable categories of serial, dissonant tonal and jazz, though Morton Gould's intriguing *Rag-Blues-Rag* mixes all of them. Ernst Bacon's *The Pig Town Fling* – evidently he had a sense of humour – stands out as folksy Americana.

Robert Help's own piece is unusual in its Symphonisch-Hausatmosphären: the big names are serialists Milton Babbitt, Mel Powell and George Perle, while Hall Overton, best known for orchestrating Monk at New York Town Hall, contributes a surprisingly up-jazzy *Patentes No 2*. But few pieces last long enough to withstand the test of time.

ROBERT NORMANDEAU

CLAIR DE TERRE

EMPREINTES DIGITALES IMED0177 CD

This is Normandeau's fourth disc for the Montréal label. Of the three compositions, two were originally intended for the theatre. Clasic Marchand's shakuhachi playing provided the material for *Makiba*, while Enyges is derived from oratorios recited by actors in Sophocles' *Electra*. *Clair De Terre* is divided into 12 sections exploring elements of cinematography transposed to electroacoustics, but the results sound too easy and unconvincing.

JESSICA PAVONE & JACKSON MOORE

SOLOS/DUOS

PLACOCK 02 CD

I was going to dismiss this wing, perplexing little recording, with a functional title, no sleeve information and no label address. Maybe Ugliness is the new Beauty, because the results are strangely compelling. The compositions – two by Pavone, two by Moore, all untitled – were recorded between 1989 and 2001. Pavone's dominates, both acoustically (it was recorded in a small room on lo-fi equipment) and musically. Moore has a classical-sounding tone on sax, though ventures some tubey-gobbling slapping, and Pavone favours indeterminate picking on violin. "2" is a study in gradations for solo violin, while "3" progresses to "4", for solo sax, is the most interesting; it's logically structured in motifs, often callously reminiscent of Kurt Schwertsik's *Ursonate*.

LAWRENCE POWER

WORKS FOR VIOLA

HARMONIA MUNDI HMD911796 CD

The viola wasn't emancipated as a solo instrument till the 20th century but Lawrence Power now takes full advantage. The viola is in his early twenties and his recital, accompanied by Simon Crawford-Phillips on piano, is an ear-opening *Heitor Villa-Lobos* (1887-1944) was a Soviet avant-gardist who flourished before Stalinist repression, and his *Sobralia* influenced First World Warata from 1926 shows a glorious lyrism and expressive intensity. Lyrical is one missed measure from György Ligeti's eccentric and haunting solo sonatas from 1965. For a long time Power liked only the bottom C string of the viola,

and the first movement covers the instrument's whole range on it. Power's interpretation stands with Tibor Zimmermann's in the Sony Complete Edition. *Toro Takanetsu's A Bird Came Down The Walk*, from the previous year, is one of the controversial products of the composer's renunciation of modernism.

JEAN-GUIHEN QUEYRAS

WORKS FOR CELLO

HARMONIA MUNDI HMD911795 CD

Three of the five great names of modern Hungarian music are featured on this excellent disc. Sándor Veress (1907-92) was taught by Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, and himself taught György Ligeti and György Kurtág. His unaccompanied solo sonatas feature beautiful 'light music' effects in its middle movement. Kodály's own *Sonata For Unaccompanied Cello* is an explosive 20th century classic. The most recent pieces are by György Ligeti, whose concern with fragments and found objects – from Webern and Marcel Duchamp respectively – came together in the 1970s in his well-known piano pieces *Játékok* (*Games*, *Games And Messages*) for various combinations of strings is not so well known. Six of its brief but striking solo pieces appear here.

ESA-PERKA SALONEN

LA VARIATIONS

SONY SK630180 CD

Following his earlier modernist style shaft with Finnish contemporaries Magnus Lindberg and Kaija Saariaho, *Esa-Pekka Salonen* has turned to the American years to 'sample, cleaver-cut musical ideas', brilliantly orchestrated and with great rhythmic energy. But maybe there's too much of John Adams and not enough of *Esa-Pekka Salonen* in these pieces, brilliantly performed by the LA Philharmonic and London Sinfonietta. The title piece, *LA Lanscape*, is colorful and spectacular, over suggesting a big band feel. Salonen doesn't readily split up the orchestra into chamber-like parts as do many contemporary composers, and its full resources are often brought to bear with a prominent part for percussion and electronics. The song cycle, *Five Images* (After Sappho), receives Dawn Upshaw with The London Sinfonietta, its pleasing pentatonic harmonies yielding at times a ripe intimacy. As they did with Saariaho, Sony have fixed them up with a coustour because scruffy composers produce untidy music.

STEFANO SCODANIBBIO

GEOGRAFIA AMOROSA

COL LEGNO WIVL002005 CD

Following last year's *Six Dances* on New Albion, this album presents recordings of the composer's output for solo double bass from the last two decades. Scodanibbio, born 1956, has worked with Rohan De Saram, Mark Strohm, Stéphane Deneve, Terry Riley, Hei-Suk Stark and Dava Buzzelli. He aims to help the instrument "finally find its own voice, after having known only the stammering of voices inappropriate to it or the sardonic voices of the so-called avant-garde". These short pieces

are essentially melodic. *Alise*, in contrast, is an arioso study in harmonics, while it's hard to believe that the orchestral resonances produced by the seesawing Marche Baroude conjure orchestral resonances are produced by one player. The arioso is quite opposed to jazz virtuosity, but Scodanibbio instead John Cage and arioso still

LISA WALKER

GROOVING WHALE

EARTHART 1013 CD

That classical violinists are now prepared to do wet T-shirt shots on the beach is well known. Lisa Walker goes one step further and actually records her violin in underwater canyons – though she doesn't explain how here. *Grooved Whale* is the nickname of her beloved Hamped Back, whose rare and early beautiful feeding calls have been field recorded and mixed into Walker's compositions. Unfortunately her settings veer too close to New Age noodling.

HUGH WOOD

SYMPHONY/SCENES FROM COMUS

MBC 0015 CD

Hugh Wood, born in Lancashire in 1932, had a late but thorough schooling in Schoenberg's 12-tone method – he even studied with Andrew Lloyd Webber's dad and survived relatively unscathed! His sensism now makes him a conservative, but even when *Scenes From Comus*, based on Milton's 17th century masque, appeared in 1965 it was hardly avant garde. *Symphony*, premièred in 1982, is as mature and orchestral statement. Its relative conservatism is irrelevant to the musical value of a turbulent, exciting masterpiece. Wood's love of quotation is handy a concession in postmodern electronica, but its perverseness adds to the delights of a packed score for large orchestra. Maybe too profound for contemporary audiences, you have to wonder how often it will be performed, making NMC's superb première recording by the BBCSO under Andrew Davis, all the more essential.

IANNIS XENAKIS

WORKS FOR LARGE ORCHESTRA VOLS I & II

TAIKANI TAK010001 CD

"Why do Bach and Mozart repeat themselves all the time?" complained Xenakis. "I am sick and tired of the kind of music that does not move." He responded with some of the last century's most radical and visceral music. Though dating back to the 70s, many of the pieces on these discs are getting their première recording. That includes the memorable, *wind* (A) which opens *Vol I*. Starting with an emphatic brass announcement, at first it seems there are two angles, but it's just bentone *Spiryx Sakias*, an experienced Xenakis interpreter, who rises and sways through the upper registers, in lines inspired by the blood-curdling cry of an Argus species of seagull. *Jonouchi* on *Vol II* does 'nature melody, rhythm and scales', but as the composer once said, by accident. The Luxembourg Philharmonic may not have obvious avant-garde credentials, but it's galvanized by conductor Arata Tanayagi. □

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Jim Haynes

ILLUSION OF SAFETY

IN OPPOSITION TO OUR
ACCELERATION

BY SMART GUITA CD

It begins pleasantly enough with the twined chords from a dinner jazz pianist factured into quaint Max/MSP patches on par with those from Stephan Mathieu or Etienne Ehret. The history of Chicago's *Illusion Of Safety* points to evidence that such aural pleasantries have been deliberately staged as a counterpoint to something far more sinister. Sure enough, a distorted ambience writes upon the rest of the album as the playful piano tones are replaced by snarled snarlings from a merrily plucked guitar coupled with psychocavally bent dross and scribbles from a microphone across a metal plate. The pinnacle of the album occurs during a collage punctuated by the Chinese water torture of a very slow leak dripping repetitively into a pool below, alongside a distant choral chant and conusive atmospheres, while *In Opposition To Our Acceleration* is a more subtle and mature manifestation of the ensemble. *Illusion Of Safety* is still attempting to actualise their name through a technical explosion of "the language of error".

THOMAS KÖNER

DAIKAN

MILLE PLATEAUX MPH07 CD

Starburst isolator Thomas Köner intended to "create a presence of sounds which do not refer to anything, and not only now, but stimulate a complete awareness, free of dammed-up *iktzen*". Yet his inclinations for monetarily calm ambience and deep subterranean rumblings still conjure the barren *Atom* references found on his *Monstak Gonguru* and even the nautical themes of Porter Ricks. Whatever, DAIKAN is a masterful construction built upon the subtle changes made between serial patterns of invesely rattling synthetic washes and bass tones which could be 909 kicks slowed down to a crawl. From within the grim tonal cellos in mottled blacks and charcoal grays, Köner twice effectively announces three descending notes as a portentous release from the album's bleak tension. DAIKAN is a suspended vision into a void of existential emptiness. It doesn't get much more dramatic than that.

ERIC LA CASA

LES PIERRES DU SEUIL 4-7
EDITION... RX100 CD

While sound archivists like Bernd Krause and Douglas Quin filter their stunning recordings of howler monkeys or bleating Weddell seals with an earnest call for instrumental preservation, Eric La Casa eschews such issues with a far more engratic form of electroacoustic poetry. Within *Les Pierres Du Seuil* 4-7, La Casa transforms the primary source material of mist, wind and water through judicious editing, mostly horn slow, streams crosshatches between massive amounts of recorded sounds. The resultant collage are thus not presented as true field recordings, but as exaggerations of the seemingly mundane properties of the elements. It begins violently with a thunderous crack of a hard rain pounding on a metal container, but settles down into a taxonomy of calming white noises including rain gently cascading upon enclosed courtyards, water oozing through reverberating pipes and wind crashing through distant forests.

POINTS OF FRICTION

SACKCLOTH AND ASHES

ANOMALOUS NM010 CD

Los Angeles based some obscurist Joseph Hammer has claimed that one of his primary musical influences was an episode of the 70s TV programme *Land Of The Giants*, in which the protagonists used tape loops to thwart alien threats. The triad piece of *hysterically* neat encapsulates the homebrewed explorations of consumer electronics, cheap instruments and general weirdness found in Hammer's work within *Points Of Friction* back in the early 80s. Shifting the fringes of the LA Free Music Society, POF emerged from a handful of art school misfits. Sackcloth And Ashes, originally released as a cassette in 1984 on Solid Eye, is undergirded by keyboards and primitive electronics, providing tense atmospheres through sustained tones and ample minor chord progressions which could have been lifted from any number of Hollywood B movies and horror films. Lo-Fi field recordings, guitar fuzz and proto-Macros amplifications of things like snapping shrimp and a diseased lung add a creepy, "mad scientist" aura to the basic electronics.

SPACE MACHINE

COSMOS FROM DIODE
LADDER FILTER
ALCHYMIE AR143 CD

TANGERINE DREAM SYNDICATE

III VIOLINS FOR III STOOGES

ALCHYMIE AR143 CD

One of the most influential labels in Japan's underground noise scene, Alchymie have introduced their new "Inner Mind Music" series of cosmic tinged soundwork with the release of these two side projects from their current line-up of artists. It's possible that Tatsuki "Muso" Yamazaki has stepped away from the slash 'n' burn power assaults found on his *Mosson* recordings. He's been resurrecting knob twiddling techniques from Clauer and Rausch Schulz with Christine 23 Orna and now the solo *Space Machine*. *Courciers*, From Géode Ladder Filter is Tatsuki's latest set of recordings which showcase his huge bank of modular synthesizers and analogue echo machines. Freer floating as an amniotic mass of pure plasma, these recordings vibrate and pulse through paranoid alarm call trills, incandescent blipping and loads of tripped out knob twiddling action. This is just as good if not better than Sonic Boom's aural electronics as EAR and Spectram.

The *Tangerine Dream Syndicate* - starring Tommy, Johnny and DeeDee Corrad - cross-pollinate a good chunk of vanguard music history from the 60s and 70s from grizzled minivales to thugish punks without breaking a sweat. Yet musically, the homage from these Japanese '60s rockers is much closer to home, towards the lytic minimalism of the legendary Ig Mahal Inners. This too, which includes Overhang's Patti Rina Fukuda and one of the salarymen from The Incapacitants, steadily bow their violins, cellos and basses into an acoustic wash of sound with occasional deep vocal chortlings and accompanying electronics. Don't be thrown by the silliness of all of the references; this is a fine album of drifting improvisations.

THUJA

GHOST PLANTS

ZUMPERON JONES EA44 CD

Thusa is one of the many guises employed by the Jewelled Antler collective of Californian

psychedelic improv. Where fellow US improvisers like No-Neck Blues Band and Jackie O Motherfucker draw from America's diverse musical histories, the Jewelled Antler crowd finds more resonance in English underground artists such as Shitey Collins, Eyeless In Gaza, Richard Youngs, zoviet'france; and AMM. Comprising former Muza gitarists Steven R Smith and Glenn Osselton, as well as lowercase composer Loren Chasse and pianist Rob Reiger, Thusa is the most drug dazed of all of the Jewelled Antler projects. Thusa stretches out sustained notes from a broad palette of sounds (sustained harmonics, distant piano, cracked branches, bells dragged across the floor, a gentle guitar melody, etc) into continuously interwoven drones and atmospherically organic passages. If you find the album too short (under 40 minutes), just play *Ghost Plants* again, as these are far too many opiated details to capture in merely one listen.

TROOM

TUKURRPA (PART TWO):
DRONES)

TRANSGENDER TR01 CD

German dionysian outfit Masonic TR contextualise their sublimely banal ambience with a number of psychological references: manifesting employing a greater use of right-brain activity, demonstrations of multiple personality disorder and outward projections of hypnagogic activity. Yet these innerness in pathologies always held far more of a human touch than that found in their Industrial cousins like SPK, who bantamised their audience with autopsy footage to pronounce an elegiac upon their "cathedral of death". After Masonic's "In disarray", two thirds of the group continued on as Troom. With the inception of the *Tukurrpa* trilogy, Troom has returned to the previous interest in psychological imagery. In most cases, invocations of dream imagery ('troom' is an archaic form of dream in German, 'tukurrpa' translates from the Australian Aborigines as daintree) plants the author within the shiny happy world of New Age. This is not so for 'troom', whose dreams must be plagued by grim visors of shadowy arches, as their monolithically dark and sunnily beautiful dreams cast from post-My Bloody Valentine guitar reverberations do not equate with an easy sleep. □



The Sonic Catering Band
'Apotheosis' CD
1) Kitchen Utensil Ploy
2) Interculinary Dimension

things

the bi-annual magazine of
all things heard and unheard

Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Holding court: King Crimson with Robert Fripp (seated)

IN THE COURT OF KING CRIMSON

SID SMITH
HELTER SKELTER PRESS £14.99

BY JULIAN COWLEY

"When I saw Crimson for the first time I felt myself somehow inferior", Sid Smith has been a devoted fan for 30 years, as he here confesses to Robert Fripp, and now he is the authoritative historian of King Crimson. In *The Court Of King Crimson* is indispensable for anyone interested in the group or in the way rock musicians interact. What really impresses is Smith's evenhandedness. Discussing the music he manages to steer clear of purely partisan evaluation, and the musicians emerge from his account as three-dimensional figures with complex personalities. Above all, he succeeds in writing the history of King Crimson, where a less capable writer might have settled for a biography of Fripp only. Obviously Fripp is central to Smith's account, but the guitarist's life is addressed to the extent that it coincides with the life of the group; other avenues such as Fripp'sories and his work with Eno and Bowie are necessarily touched upon but the focus is held steady on the drama of King Crimson.

One of Fripp's tenets is that "music creates the musician"; in practice this has meant King Crimson music shaping such radically diverse individuals as Greg Lake, Joni Mitchell and Adrian Belew in the course of its various incarnations. Smith doesn't reduce Fripp's centrality to a simple statement that Crimson is, after all, his group; rather he shows how Fripp, pragmatist as

much as idealist, has kept the channels open for the insect to flow. As the account confirms over and over, it's been a thorny business, a tale of conflict and profound frustration as well as enduring musical achievement. Smith is a dedicated fan but he doesn't conceal evidence that seems to support drummer Bill Bruford's suggestion that Fripp is "a difficult bugger".

A large part of the book's success rests upon Smith's scrupulous research. He has had access to musicians' diaries and interviewed them in person, so a rounded picture of key events emerges. Smith lets contradictory versions stand, with minimal commentary, and out of that clash of perspectives comes a tangible sense of King Crimson's internal dynamics over the years. Charlotte Haze, multi-instrumentalist Ian McDonald's partner at the time of the group's first incarnation, is allowed her view that bassist Greg Lake was "a great big ego, a big penis on legs", but more seriously there's also ample testimony that Lake's self-confidence and powerful voice were as crucial to the group's early success as Peter Sinfield's lyrics and lightshow, a necessary component of that curiously potent mix of disparate characters.

Fripp's total commitment to practice as a basis for his way of living (29 hours a day according to Baines) is traced back to his schooldays. Crimson's pre-history, like all subsequent phases, is illustrated with a large number of evocative black and white photos. Drummer Michael Giles is depicted at his kit back in 1969. Fripp and Gordon Haskell are shown during the "Shadow Walk" with their group The League of Gentlemen

in 1964. Giles, Giles & Fripp are seen trying hard to appear zany. Meanwhile, Smith registers the salient details.

When it comes to each album release, starting with *The Cheerful Insanity Of Giles, Giles & Fripp*, Smith provides a track by track breakdown. This proves highly effective because instead of focusing on his own insights he includes the musicians' own recollections and observations plus relevant anecdotes, and this makes the survey consistent in tone with the rest of the history. Smith doesn't intrude; his comments are sparingly distributed and make sense (although some might question whether Fripp really was the New Wave's most original thinker). They are supplemented by well-chosen quotes from contemporary reviews of the records and concerts, notably by Melody Maker's Richard Williams.

Fripp's musical curiosity has often appeared to be King Crimson's driving force, but Smith makes it clear that he by no means had a monopoly on such inquisitiveness. Michael Giles regularly attended concerts by the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, some years before maverick percussionist Jamie Muir entered the fold for the Lark's Tongues In Aspic phase. The success of these arresting freely improvised passages on the first album was underpinned by genuinely broad-based musical awareness. It's also made clear, on the other hand, that Peter Giles and (more blustery) Gordon Haskell were baffled and distrustful of pianist Keith Tippett's inventive contributions to the group's early 70s recordings. Inclusion in the book of Oboe Redding fan

Haskell's frank statements of distrust or distaste for King Crimson's music is a measure of Smith's determination to be fair to all parties, and makes for some entertaining asides.

Fripp makes some acerbic observations but he is notably generous in his comments upon the musicianship of some of his collaborators. Virtuoso bassist Tony Levin, Ian McDonald and saxophonist Mel Collier receive fulsome praise, and given the guitarist's personal commitment to technique, it's salutary to be reminded of the way he encouraged Bee Burnell to take up bass, recognising the singer's innate musicality despite his technical limitations.

The group that recorded *In The Court Of The Crimson King* (1969) and supported The Stones in Hyde Park is regarded throughout as a touchstone of Crimson magic. Members of that incarnation still regard it as special, a truly collective creative experience. Fripp remarks, "Everyone was involved. This is how a group works — if one person thinks of an idea, sooner or later someone will play it. The committed energy of the band generated some spectacular and audacious leaps into the unknown. Crimson didn't know what they couldn't do and went for it with gusto. *Orchesta*." A lingering sense of what might have been had McDonald and Giles not chosen to depart haunts the account. But Smith leaves no doubt of the value of what has followed. He does so as a fan, rooted in by the respectable historian's discipline. With full discography and brief survey of what the cast of characters is up to today, Smith has done the job definitely and made it highly readable. □

Ether Talk

Dispatches from the digital domain.

This month:
Touch's *Ringtones* CD highlights the mobile phone industry's lack of imagination. By Anne Hilde Neset



"Looks weird, sounds great". With the release of Touch Ringtones, Nokia's current advertising slogan for its new range of mobile phones takes on a new meaning. By "sounds great", their advertising guru surely didn't have Farmer's Mania's abrasive clicks 'n' creaks, Bruce Gilbert's air raid sirens or Keltie Matthew's crackly chomps in mind. New-generation mobile technology allows the user to record a small sample of any sound on a memory chip, opening up the possibility for an infinite number of noises it could use to attract attention. Ringtones contains 99 suggested sounds for the purpose – tones and digital noises by the likes of Carsten Nicolai and Ryo Ikeda; sound effects such as a belly crying and Swedish actress Regina Lund's recording of a piggy organ; and whimsical soundscapes like DJ Giacometti's "A Concise History Of Californian Rock Music in Under 5 Seconds" and London artists Gilbert & George's po-faced micro-dialogues: "How shall we spend the day, Gilbert? Just now I was to see the falling of the light through the window", and "Why don't we go out and buy a vase?"

"We sent out the brief to more or less everyone we'd worked with in recent years, and to various others whose address we had and whose work we respected," explains Touch's

Mike Harding, who put Ringtones together with partner Jon Womersley. "We asked them to submit a ringtone which they would like to hear on their mobile phone... Initially they were advised that it should be loopable, and last up to four seconds, but some submissions [proved this], he explains. Some contributions last up to one minute, while Colgate's Thomas Brinkmann bypassed all restrictions by submitting a written table of digits which makes up the proposed ringtone; to hear it, you have to program it in yourself using the phone's 'compose function.'

Harding's sleuthes uncover the dark backstop to the mobile phone industry's images of "friends reunited" and "life full of love to share". In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it's estimated that two million lives have been claimed by the illegal mining of the mineral Coltan, a highly efficient electrical conductor used in computers and mobile phones. A UN report highlighting these tragedies is downloadable from the Touch Website (www.touch-demon.co.uk).

A recent survey reported that mobile phone is stolen in the UK every minute, the thefts usually committed by under-18s. Even without the added complexities of criminal, health and political issues, there is a significant backlash simply against the intrusive effect of mobile phones into daily life and their effect on the

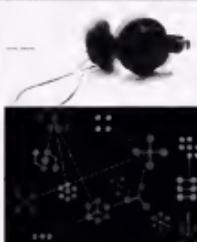
social environment. "Cell-yell" is a term coined in the USA for people who shout into their mobiles; and a Website, www.calmanips.com, has been set up solely for "promoting civility between phone users and the people around them". Phenobashing.com is a less chilled version, set up by people who hate mobiles so much they take pleasure in bashing inconsiderate users and documenting their revenge attacks on the Web. "You would expect, there were a handful of [adults] [we approached] who would have nothing to do with anything related to mobile phones," Harding admits.

Ringtones attempts to address these controversies, as well as to critique, in Harding's words, "the innately conservative attitudes of telecom companies – and users. The lack of imagination that is coupled with new technologies that claim the future to be them" [image], for example, sitting on the train home and hearing, instead of a consolingly familiarie of flight of the Bumblebee, the cry of coracaries and African fish eagles, howling wolves and hyenas, or the song of an Atlantic puffin, all courtesy of former Cabinet Minister Chris Watson when asked whether it's his job's utopian dream to translate the computer game experience into a samplistic symphony or an approximation of the African savannah. Harding soberly hopes people will

appreciate "the balance between the practical and the provocative. In other words, while it would be really amazing to hear bratty greetings, or raid warnings or Gilbert & George on a train journey, you wouldn't want to be in a carriage full of Pitt ringones!"

15 years ago the mobile was a yuppie toy (think Michael Douglas in *Oliver Stone's Wall Street*, standing on his empty beach with a plastic brick pressed against his ear). Mass-produced and marketing only kicked in over the last five years, and the phone now is one of the main conduits for communication, information and entertainment in the West, which will only increase with the emphasis on increased content-delivery via WAP services. In a recent survey on mobiles commissioned by Motorola, cyberfeminist Sadie Plant argues that, in countries like Afghanistan, whose landscape and infrastructure effectively prohibits the installation of telephone lines, it will be much easier to bring in telephony and the Internet via satellite. Soon, the mobile network will escalate the globe – but that doesn't help when it cannot cope with the most precarious of situations. Ringtones ends with the cold automated voice which greets network callers on 11 September in New York: "All circuits are busy now, please try your call later." □ Ringtones is out now on Touch

Go To:



Make sure you have some time on your hands and all the plug-ins in the world before entering **Soundbytes** (www.soundbytes.org). This huge site, created by artist **Stanza** (www.stanza.co.uk), functions as an exhibition series and portal for artists to "explore the paradigm of audio/visual practice" – that is, display online games which are on the forefront of programming methods. The site contains a long list of specially commissioned Net art projects to click on, many with an experimental Shockwave navigation system. The Links page will throw you into an ocean of sound and graphics and, when you feel visually and sonically overstimulated, plant yourself in front of the in-house journal providing a forum for debate around the creative use of new technologies.

One of the featured Soundbytes participants, New York based artnet/interactive designer **Hirokazu Miram**, recently finalised **The Jetty**

(www.thejetty.org), punningly based on Chris Marker's influential short film *La Jetée*. The site is dedicated to revealing the chronological events of the film via still images that fade in and out according to the timeline accompanied with sentences from the film's voiceover. All is accompanied by the chilling title from an airplane or the Dry Jetty, where the film was set, creating a poetic synopsis of one of the most intriguing futuristic visions film has produced.

Anyone interested in Vicki Bennett aka People Like Us' current favourite "dos does, is las and poms poms" should go to **Totalradio** (www.totalradio.co.uk), a Brighton based Net radio station overseen by former XFM and mistress of the Total Radio's daily show *Claire Kenner*. The site also contains shows from Fat Cat and Leaf labels, interviews with artists like Jimi Tenor, Jan Wobble, Calexico, Lesser, Colin

Neiman as well as The Wire's very own Ken Hollings, reading from his new book *Destroy All Monsters*.

With the perplexing tagline "no one, anyone", **Directions in Collaborative Audio** (www.directionsincollaborativeaudio.org) starts up this month. Welcoming audio of all kinds, the site is an independent online community of musicians set up to facilitate collaborations across the globe. Each member submits a rhythmic or melodic "seed" fitting the given brief (a tempo will be recommended). The community can then choose each other's submissions, post ideas, request input, and download the samples they want to work with. Then comes the final effort of arranging and manipulating the material individually to a consistent track. The results will be made available as a streaming broadcast and future CD release. Go create.

ANNE HILDE NESET

Miles high: Davis, with bassist Michael Henderson, circa *Dark Magus*, 1974

MILES TO GO: THE LOST YEARS, AN INTIMATE MEMOIR OF LIFE ON THE ROAD WITH MILES DAVIS 1973-1983

CHRIS MURPHY
THUNDER'S MOUTH PRESS Pbk \$24.95

Chris Murphy was an Irish-American guitarist who landed a job as roadie with Miles Davis in 1973, eventually taking over as his trusted road manager. He became devoted to his boss, in almost a father-son relationship – at one point Murphy lets drop the comment that he got most kindness from Miles than from his own father. But soon it was Miles, with his depression and lots of self-concern, who was the one who needed looking after. Miles went into years of dark depression after 1976, but Murphy was there for his triumphant return in 1981.

This is a much more positive picture of Davis the man than you get from many memoirs, even Miles': *The Autobiography*. In fact, Quincy Troupe's book genuinely praises Murphy: 'The almost perverse delight Miles seemed to take... in presenting himself as a meat, sicko jerk, addled

by drugs, violent and debauched, is very strange to me', though that's certainly a side to the book, in my recollection much of it is inspiring. And there's plenty of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll in Murphy's memoir of Miles in his darkest electric period. As the bass said: 'You should be writing this shit down. Nobody would ever believe it.' In the acknowledgments Murphy candidly

comments, 'I have made every effort to remain accurate insofar as the chronology of events and concerts are concerned, but, as the narrative shows, we were high a lot of the time back then.' Murphy began as a rock 'n' roll guitarist, and his memoir has interesting essays on players who came into Miles's orbit, such as Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings and, most important of course, Henderson. Murphy has no time for the older, mostly white jazz fans whose intellectual preconceptions prevented them appreciating Miles's new directions. In these ways Murphy has a lot in common with Paul Tingen, whose excellent Miles Beyond was reviewed recently in these pages – though I'd say that rather than leaving jazz behind, Miles expanded its concepts.

Murphy is offering a memoir, not a musical

analysis, but the book reflects his wide-ranging responsibilities. He has to stand in for Miles at a press conference in Japan, placating the assembled hacks with 'first-class housewife', as he describes it. He was also deputed to call up new group members. Miles would give him a name and phone number, and the reaction from the chosen musician, often toiling for a gigante in the vineyards of music, conformed to a pattern of incredulity: 'Hello, my name is Chris Murphy, with the Miles Davis band. Miles wants you to join the band.' 'No man, really, who is that?' 'No kidding, I'm really calling for Miles.' 'Oh bullshit, who is this? Is this Raphael?' This isn't funny, Raphael... The players during his time with Miles included Al Foster, Sonny Fortune, Dave Liebman, Pete Cosey, Mike Stern and John Scofield.

Then's some interesting discussion of the mid-

70s albums *Agharta* and *Pangaea*, recorded in Japan when Miles was already sick, they weren't released in the US and became underground classics. But according to Murphy, this poor treatment by Columbia contributed to Davis's emotional decline and disappearance from

playing. Murphy tried his best to drag Miles out of the torpor at his House of Usher-like townhouse, but to no avail. Eventually he took a job with *Weather Report* – a completely contrasting set-up which was much more controlled, less spontaneous than Davis's. (Apparently Jaco Pastorius introduced himself as 'the world's greatest bass player' whenever he answered the phone.)

After Miles's comeback, things were done more professionally than before – which shows in the music too, for good and ill. *The Prince of Darkness* had mellowed, even if his most-used phrase remained 'Fuck you'. Where before he'd been content to leave Mick Jagger waiting in a car outside his apartment, asking 'What the fuck do I have to say to him?', he now greatest rock stars warmly. The so-called pop period is also more sober: after a slight stroke in 1982 Davis had to give up drinking and smoking completely. By the time of his final decline, Murphy was no longer working for him. But his memoir fills in some interesting gaps in our knowledge. It's attractively produced, with lots of pictures – as easy and enjoyable read. □

FRANK ZAPPA

CARL-LUDWIG REICHERT
DEUTSCHER TASCHENBUCH VERLAG Pbk \$10
BY BEN WATSON

Most British music writers believe a shared language gives them privileged access to American culture, so Europeans can tell us little about rock. This misguided belief is amply illustrated by this gem of a book. Reichert narrates a story that has now been told at print many times, but nevertheless finds a host of intriguing facts and original points. The selection of photographs, mainly in colour, is excellent, avoiding the 'dose to death' images, with unexpected bonuses like shots of Frank Zappa's antagonists, John Wayne and Richard Nixon, plus

a photo of Zappa's family home when he was 15. Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag's 'Porträts' series, of which this is the latest, places Zappa in illustrious company (the list includes Societas, Gardiano Bruno, Bach, Hendrix and Freud – the only other rock stars are Hendrix and Lennon). Extra information (on topics as diverse as the Erolitti label, Cordwainer Smith, canine continuity and L Shonker) is placed under a red line on each page, and these are authentic, 'off the leash' materials for further investigation! (including a fantastic Eskimo bibliography and a list of mid-60s films with 'Mondo' in the title).

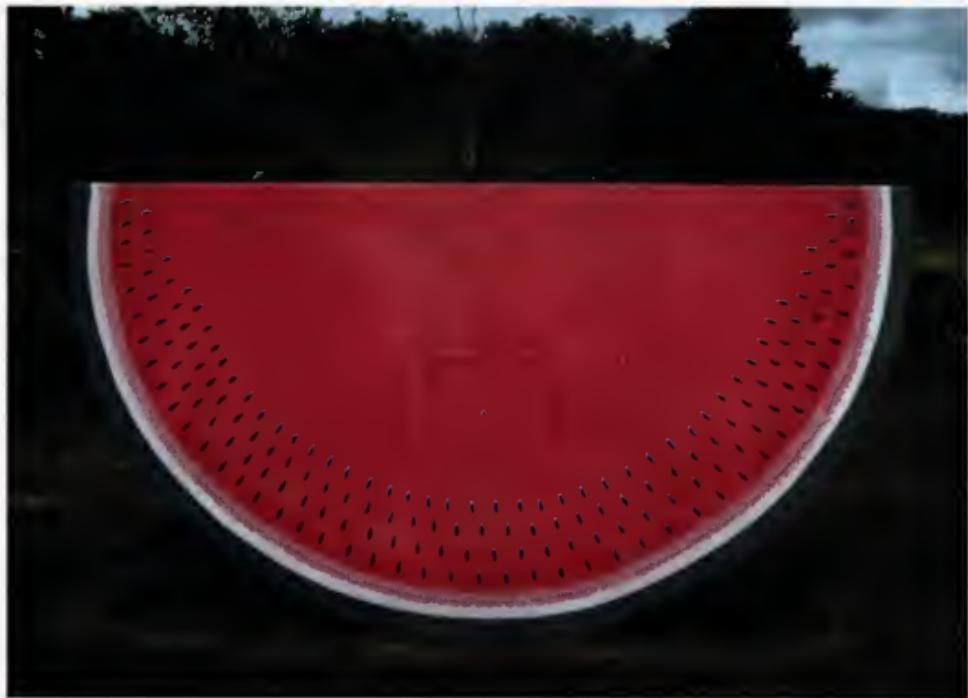
In this study, Reichert has used Zappa as the occasion for developing a non-academic, critical

'mass culture sifting' approach which takes Prince as seriously as Guy Debord. He is scornful of the connoisseur uptake of Zappa as a cerebral jazz-rocker (only in Germany!), and emphasises his roots in doo-wop and gutter R&B. He is fascinating about the moment when revolutionary students disrupted a Mothers Of Invention concert in Berlin in 1968, appending an unpublished photo, and cites the brilliant Helmut Saenger, whose Swinging Benjamin made connections between freak rock and critical theory back in 1973. Reichert's words on the late 70s commercialisation of rock are fierce and shaming.

There are few minor errors, but my only major complaint is that two paragraphs and a citation

from Wilhelm Reich from one of my own essays (in Richard Kostelanetz's *Zappa Companion*) have somehow lost their quotation marks in being translated into German and become part of Reichert's own resounding conclusion (though maybe this plagiarism could be interpreted as dialectical enlightenment...).

Reichert's big syntax and rich vocabulary present difficulties for anyone whose German is rudimentary, but it's well worth the trouble. Where else would you discover that pole-rock sweater could generate the phrase 'das rollengrenzenüberschreitende Gefüge der Existenzialisten'? If Zappa were alive, he'd surely have found a place for that touronic compound-adjective in a cabaret number. □

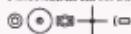


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#048

On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, clubs in the flesh

Top left and right: Jaga Jazzist in Oslo. Bottom: Electrelane in London



.NO FESTIVAL

OSLO BLÅ

NORWAY

By ROB YOUNG

A few years ago, Norway's perceived contribution to the world of music consisted of nothing much more than overblown jazz orchestras, pyromaniac Black Metal groups and the Protestant purity of Jan Garbarek's God-battering hymnals with The Hilled Ensemble. But lately there have been more encouraging signs that the country's underground musicians are finding a special voice. Labels such as Rune Grammofon, Smalltown Supersound, Improv label Sola and the way-outa-leftfield likes of Kjetil Ø Brondsrød and Nasagi are drilling a seam of creativity that may yet match Norway's oil quotas.

Smalltown Supersound boss Joaquin Haugland was the driving force behind December's two night .NO Festival at the city's Blå club. Boasting one of the finest sound systems in any small European club, Blå's warehouse ambience provides a roost for a large number of music and club mixes; and the regular .NO nights, produced in collaboration with this magazine, have brought more international artists into Oslo than before.

But this event redressed the balance by bringing some of Norway's own talent into the capital.

Events kicked off with a laptop set by Alexander Ishaug, an electronics sculptor whose Panorama CD is just about to emerge on Smalltown. Periodically, his careful and conscientious essay in concrete digital shapes much with a number of smaller projects sculpting raw and stonial noise, tones and percussive clicks (see also from Corrine and Tohshiru Nakamura and Philip Jeck all the way to John Zorn's Hemispherical Theatre music), but the abstract and often penitentiary music is at its most visceral and engaging when pounding through a small club system.

Both Åleg and Spunk, two Rune Grammofon regulars, made understated, intuitive and improvised noises. The former conquer technical problems on the night with a closing duet that pits a bowed cymbal endurance test over tentative, patterning laptop pulses. Female chamber-improv Spunk tend to direct their explorations of amplified and FX-treated here, string instruments, percussive and whirled plastic tubing at each other rather than the gallery. Kim Hesthøy's abstract graphic designs

should be familiar to anyone who's ever seen a Rune Grammofon label sleeve, but his parallel career as an electronic musician is less well known. His *Hele* CD was a tumble of Autobreath, Aphexy bubbles, and there's some of that, tonight, but he augments the live appearance by opening with a drowsing intro accompanied by Spunk singing a falsetto love song, and closing with an unsteady duet with Martin Henneth, the irrepressible drummer of Jaga Jazzist, while the unquestionable highlight of .NO.

Jaga Jazzist are a ten piece jazz fusion outfit, with none of the awfulness that description implies. Like some of the best big jazz groups of the early '70s, they demonstrate a genuine and free-loving collectivity while keeping hips and minds on the funk. Henneth is an assessable 'leader', though you get the feeling none of the group would accept such a denomination. But it's his sweat-drenched contemplation of his drum kit, souped up with an MPC3000 percussion sampler, which inevitably holds the eye. The group's arsenal includes trumpets, trombone, electric guitar and bass, tuba, two bass clarinets, Fender Rhodes and vibraphone. Apparently they supported Tortoise when they

recently played in Oslo. While there are superficial similarities in approach, on the strength of this I would like to imagine the Chicagoans not being tom-ahed off stage. Locking in around Henneth's magisterial bludgeoning – several times he can't stop himself leaping to his feet like Elvin's return concert in '69 – the group glide along any grooves never quite activating the jazz cruise control – there's little space for self-satisfied solos or waltzing. During the hour long set you're reminded of the likes of Red & Tickles (no, Crimson Orchestra, Sextet, Nucleus, Centipede and Icosite 217 and Kenny Wheeler's mid-'70s ECM groups – a headlong cluster of chugging syncopated rhythms with homologous magnificence beating a flightpath overfeild. Henneth is everywhere, occasionally standing up to baffle home a rhythmic argument or deftly clambering around triggering beats without missing a pulse on the acoustic drums. And when Andreas Maja steps away from his vibraphone and buckles down to fleshing out the grooves on an extra emblem set, you feel the building about to levitate. Who will save us from the fury of the Northerner? □

ELECTRELANE
LONDON ARTS CAFE

UK

By LOUISE GRAY

There's something sweetly appropriate about the selections made by two DJs who are warming up this venue for Electrelane. X-Ray Spex, B-52s, The Jets and some gimlet-eyed rocksteady – much of it, one presumes, recorded when the Electrelane quartet were mere babies in arms. The DJs – both women, incidentally – do little synchronised dances, half masked potato, half Ride Like a Hurricane triumph. These details matter because their weight of history, their articulation of a persuasive continuity is what drives Electrelane.

And at breakneck speed too. Electrelane's instruments by tagline all begin with, with sustained chords from Verity Sutiman's keyboards and a few droplet notes from guitarist Ma

Clarke. This state of suspense is a stretchable condition – from seconds to what can seem like minutes – but the acceleration, when it comes, is expressible in nothing less than terms of G-force. On this evidence, the Brighton based group had good reason to name their 2001 debut album *Rock It To The Moon*. A nod to drummer Emma Gee and bassist Rachel Dolley, and "The Invisible Dog", the opener to both *Getting Faster and Faster* and the Arts Cafe gig, begins its ascent, getting faster and faster (Gaze surely must be one of the hottest hitlers around), the bar lines now a blur of kinetic energy. Electrelane deal with the problem of ending each piece in a pleasingly simple way: they just stop. It's an old punk tactic, but just as it was practised by such past masters as The Ramones or The Stooges, the sudden whoosh of silence is shocking, prepossessing even.

The Arts Cafe – a small venue located in the

East End's Toynbee Hall – is, to take a line from psychogeographers such as Iain Sinclair and Peter Ackroyd, a place that resonates with a sense of subcultural change. Live artist Frankie B labours in blood in his studio directly below the venue. Only months before, Toynbee Hall's preachers were powdery in their pursuit of Janet Cardiff's sound installations, or the traces of proudly deviant sexualities that the performance cult Ouskle seeks to discover throughout London. In short, a most suitable venue for Electrelane, clear winner in pop's feminist sweepstakes, a foot out of their audience – a post-past-fetish girl crew still in their audience for the questionable talents of Elastica and Echo & the Bells.

For a group whose name is, at present, often coupled with Le Tigre, NYC's finest electro-feminists, Electrelane can be surprisingly understated. No lyrics (or none audible, even on

tracks like "Long Oak") mean that the content of their music has to be experienced in different ways. Their album may be, rather sweetly, dedicated to around 20 feminist icons (Aung San Suu Kyi to Mae Tucker), by way of Yoko Ono, Joan Jett and Patti Smith, but the images the music conjures are somewhat less combative. Live, however, Electrelane's sweeping synths and driving rhythms evoke something different again: the particular desolation of the British shoreline, the out-of-season melancholy of holiday seasons emptied of daytrippers. Sutiman's ticks, so well known on a cheap organ, have all the resonances of a film soundtrack (see girls in knee-highs and vintage Mims...) that's taken a new lease of life.

For all their focus, there's a pleasing rawness about Electrelane's live velocity. Long may it last. As the shaker plastered across one of the group's Marshall amps reads: "Girls Rock". □

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Frequencies [Hz]

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Exhibition Performance Series

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Feb. 10 *Ryo / Daniel Grottel / Surf Michael von Hausswolff*

Franz Domke

Feb. 15 *Carsten Nicolai / Frank Bretschneider*

Feb. 16 *Ann Lisicki / Thomas Köner with Jürgen Reble*

Feb. 22 *Franz Domke / Mainpal Inv. – Goodiepal*

Feb. 23 *Monza / System inc. / Ekkehard Ehlers*

Feb. 28 *Markus Döhne / Ottobrückel vs. Onlab /*

Richard Chai

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Praise the Lord and pass the Pro Plus: Keiji Haino's all-night Right

KEIJI HAINO TOKYO SHOWBOAT

APRIL
BY BIBA KOFF

All night concerts are like parties during wartime. In a city the size of Tokyo, curfew conditions kick in once the last trains gone, keeping people off the streets until the public transport system is back up and running. Of course Tokyo has its perpetual daytimes for dionysiacs but, 20 minutes away from its Shinjuku hub, Kaenji isn't one of them. Even most of the clippings living the silvery leading up to the Showboat's rock basement have shut up early for the New Year. With so few people in the vicinity an hour before its 1am start, I thought I was in the wrong place, until convinced otherwise by the boozey apparition of a woman old enough to know better dragged up in Keiji Haino cut, fringe and long cape. Reassuringly, the sleazeball mood queasy that has formed by the time the doors open isn't so fanatically atuned. But the uniform black dress code and the atmosphere of subdued anticipation in the barely lit basement

say that nobody's expecting any concessions to the holiday season.

No roar greets Haino, trademark impenetrable shades firmly in place, when he slopes onto the small, barely raised stage, now darkened to a penumbra glow by dim blue and white spots, only to quickly disappear below the audience's sightlines. Falling to his knees, he strikes up a harmonium-like drone on a keyboard and holds it for an eternity, until its lowering tone synaesthetically merges with the darkness. His right canvas now primed pitchblack, he proceeds to choreograph the shadowplay of himself as one man orchestra. He cuts a lone, spectral figure as he sensually picks through a clutter of familiar and strange instruments pulled from his ever growing world collection from the range of different projects, collaborations and ad hoc improv encounters he's participated in these past dozen years. It's clear that he's more than capable of squeezing his essence, Anaxid-like, from anything that'll make a noise. But this is only his second night out as a one man orchestra, apparently. He makes it

very quickly evident that he has no special interest in displaying any virtuosity as a multi-instrumentalist. Rather, he appears to have naked this up against himself as a challenge to any habit-forming processes he might have fallen into on his usual instruments.

Armed with samples and pedals, he deftly loops and layers sounds plucked, blown, beaten or scraped from a chosen instrument. Like a potter moulding rings of clay, he responds to the individual densities and textures of the sound materials at his fingertips to shape each individual piece. Most astonishing are the weirdly ectoplasmic figures constructed from Haino's sampler-amassed phonetic stutters and voice-breaths, and built into a disembodied chorus that fills the room. Watching him painstakingly whip up woothoo storms of percussive from various seemingly ill-fitting and sometimes awfully syncopated patterns, you begin to understand why he decided not to replace Fushishuwa's departed drummer. Constantly shifting the musical ground he's walking on, Haino rends the night with wild reed shrieks,

peering whistles, barking, conchlike noise, string drones. For the most part, his guitar is left untouched, except as a tool for laying down some jazz-composed beds which he briefly solos over. The nature of what he's doing imposes an episodic structure — sample, nurture, blossom — on the affair, but each blossoming moment is bursting with different details; and when, towards the end, Haino sends up a shimmering squadron of glissando notes from a shouldered harp, people are no longer sure whether it's him or him who's died and gone to heaven.

And all of a sudden, with a brief "Domō alligato", he's gone. Unbelievably, he has played for almost five hours without a break or any idle audience banter. While it was happening, there were moments when it felt like it would never end, but now it's over, the night feels like it passed in a instant. Yet long after the sun's come up, the night's music continues to haunt the alternately wired and elated state you're left in by sleep deprivation, and you realize how most all of Haino's work occupies that instant- eternity between waking and dreaming. □



Michael Gira (right) with Angels Of Light

ANGELS OF LIGHT FEATURING MICHAEL GIRA + CALLA

NEW YORK BOWERY
BALLROOM

USA

BY DAN JONES

For Brooklyn group Calla, who have been taken under the wing of Michael Gira's Young God label, minimalism is the watchword. Not a note is wasted during their end of year support slot at New York's Bowery Ballroom. Every simple melody or chime note sample goes towards creating the melancholy mood that engulfs the group's songs. The three piece develop atmosphere with just a few ingredients, an electric guitar, clang metal on metal samples and creaking bass and drums. Sometimes, Junio Valle's whispered vocals, Ennio Morricone-style guitar twangs, and drummer Wayne B. Maguire's nerve-jangling samples bring to mind Portishead working their way through *Neil Young's Dead Man* soundtrack.

Live, a track like "Fear Of Fertiles", from the recent Scavengers album, could pass for a pop song, albeit one heard down a dark alley, propelled by a cyclical bassline, simple guitar

strums and slinky percussion. However, Calla also deal in strophes and dynamics. The set opener, "The Swans", builds from simple strumming into a challdboard scope crescendo, leavened with layers of reverb-bathing feedback. Frontman Valle is the quiet eye of the storm: his resolutely low-key delivery gives the impression that you are eavesdropping on a private conversation.

Calla's sound often splits the difference between sample-heavy Ambient and guitar-driven alternative rock. The group frequently base songs around melodic samples that might have been recorded in a scrapbook, and these found sounds are overlaid with plangent guitar plucking. Calla's roots show through with a cover of Can's "Mother Sky" (a tribute to the recently deceased Michael Karoli?), a loopy master infused with fuzzy guitar and heartstopping tape loop ceases — and a new song with a baseline that whines at The Poxes, "Awake And Under", from their self-titled first album on Sub Rosa, is the most striking moment in the set. The recorded version is a sinister lullaby. Live, the track is shot through with deep church organ bass and treble-scratch guitar, a thick sound that hits through the gut and hangs in the air even after they stop playing.

Where Calla are reserved, former Swans frontman Michael Gira has become quite the raconteur, in a dark and Gothic fashion, naturally. At one point during the show, he claims to have slept with every member of his current outfit, Angels Of Light; during the course of the tour. Looking like an escapee from a Flannery O'Connor novel, what with his severe buzz cut and film noir suit, Gira leads his Angels through a set that sounds like the final flowering of 60s chamber death pop. Using instruments such as bass, vibes and acoustic guitar, the group lay down a lush bed of sound to accompany Gira's deep-throated singing.

Gira, the only permanent member of The Angels Of Light, concentrates on songs from *How I Loved You* album and a selection of recent unreleased tunes. Often the tracks bring to mind Lou Reed's Berlin, Lee Hazlewood, Leonard Cohen or newer acts like Lambchop or Tiredsticks. Nevertheless, Gira's music has not entirely lost its abrasive edge. The group kick up a miasma of sound in a new song called "Nou Souls Rising" and keeps up the doleful character in "Nations", another sombre track that has yet to be recorded. Generally, however, the Angels get to

a purer acoustic sound live — one that relies less on feedback and echo and more on strum and drum dynamics and lighter-in-air vibraphone for its sonic charge.

Lyrical, Gira's songs intermingle his own confessions with the stories of the losers, boozers and users he encounters in the cities he travels through, whether that be "Rose Of Los Angeles" or "New York City Girls". These days, however, there is a more disasembled element of black humour and self-parody in his work. "I hate you for your love, and I hate you for your sex," he sings to the audience during "My Suicide". Gira's vocals are mused loud, and like the man himself, his dark chocolate croon comes off as both lubricious and lugubrious on stage. In a club setting, his voice takes on new dimensions, one minute hectoring the crowd like an old time preacher, and whispering sweet and sour nothings in his ear the next. This balancing act between Gira's past as an austere neoscholar and the lighter, more textured stylings of The Angels Of Light is perfectly illustrated at the end of the show as, bathed in blue light, Gira formally — almost prettily — slips all the strings off his acoustic guitar. □

CORNELIUS CARDEW DAY LONDON CONWAY HALL UK

BY PHILIP CLARK

Prior to this retrospective day of Cornelius Cardew's music, former Fluxus/MEV composer Frederic Rzewski observed to me that Cardew could spot another composer's weaknesses at a hundred paces, but had an absolute blind spot when it came to his own. That sentence resonated in my mind throughout this long afternoon. The considerable highs of AMM's delicately oozing set and Rzewski's own towering performance of the epic solo piece *We Sing For The Future* sat awkwardly next to pieces whose strength of purpose and concept died with the political dogma that fed them.

Things got off to a sedious start with Paragraph VI of *We Sing For The Future* performed by surviving members of The Scratch Orchestra. As to the purpose and concept of this work, the audience were left in the dark. Isolated squeaks from both Michael Parsons's one-fingered piano and a decidedly cooing violin were met with doodles

from jingling toy percussion instruments. From a purely musical point of view, the performance was too constituted to be interestingly arbitrary, too too random for that suffocation to bear creative fruit. Half the ensemble left the stage a few minutes before the end to no particular effect, and it was neither provoked nor irritated in a meaningful way. It was a performance for the benefit of those on the stage, and deathly dull for anyone else.

The second set opened with John Tilbury's tender performances of the folky piano pieces *The Croppy Boy* and *Father Murphy*, and his last reading of February Peaces, described by Cardew as "a 'compendium of avant garde piano techniques'. Tilbury exudes a warm and unrusty authority and watching him play is always an absorbing experience. As February Peaces came to an end, AMM members Eddie Prévost and Keith Rowe arrived on stage, and the performance moved seamlessly into a realisation of The Tiger's Mind. Tilbury's lines became softer and more delicate than the piano normally allows, his melodic shapes weaving

feuilletonnique charm. Prévost was more forceful as isolated cymbal and skin sounds evolved into larger paragraphs, and Rowe acted as an arbitrator and punctuated the performance with a selection of carefully honed commas and full-stops that gave the long structure momentum.

Tilbury, Rowe and Prévost are like three perfectly oiled cogs in an ever evolving machine, and the fact they had independence from Castroviejo has allowed their work to define its own references. But after that questionable performance by "former members" of The Scratch Orchestra, the remaining associates of People's Liberation Union seemed even more anachronistic. This group was Cardew's experiment in fusing a jazz/rock fusion language with political thump-thumping. In its heyday the PLM performed at rallies and demonstrations, but 30 years on and in a concert situation the material was toe-curlingly embarrassing. A drummer of comical incompetence anchored riff that sounded like Rick Wakeman's cast-off. Singers Vicki Sava and Chris Thompson beamed as they delivered the most excruciating of

political doggerel with the worst sort of amateur's confidence. Naturally there was no sense of postmodern irony, which is a shame because that was pure Mel Brooks or Harry Hill. It takes a very special lack of critical judgment to perform this music today as if we still sit in the 1970s — People's Liberation Union needs a leader.

Frederic Rzewski's performance of *We Sing For The Future* was as vivid and powerful as his new recording of the work (reviewed on page 68). He made sympathetic use of the aesthetic contradictions Cardew's music presents and did so with panache of ensemble control and subtlety. Likewise, John White, Hugh Shrapnel and Christopher Hobbs of the Promenade Theatre Orchestra had the wisdom to acknowledge in the programme notes that their performance of *Odet '62* was a tribute to Cardew, rather than a demonstration of their recent developments. As such it worked. And all the performances by "former members" highlighted how even music that aims to remove itself from the "tradition" is not immune from building its own repertoire of empty proclivities and clichés. □



Clockwise from left: Michiko Yagi and Akikazu Nakamura

KOKOO LONDON QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL/SPITZ

UK

BY CLIVE BELL

Akikazu Nakamura was a 20 year old King Crimson fan when he first heard the shakuhachi on Tora! Tora! Tora!'s November Steps. Inspired to take up the Japanese flute, he went straight to the top man for lessons, embarking on a 15 year apprenticeship with Kotatsu Itokyo. During this time he studied at Boston's Berklee College of Music, and pushed the shakuhachi out into jazz and rock, even playing with John Coltrane's drummer, Elvin Jones. Last autumn he gave an enthusiastic welcome to Nakamura's solo album of classical shakuhachi pieces (*The Wind 211*), on which he played with a focused ferocity not heard since the death of Zen master Watsuzumu.

In December Nakamura brought his trio Kokoo to the UK for a short tour. Of the two keto players, Michiko Yagi is familiar from Otomo Yoshihide's Japanese tour and Heico's off-the-wall pop trio Hoashi. The other keto is played by Miki Maruta. At the QEII the trio collaborated

one of the UK's leading period instrument ensembles. Stings only for this show, The DAE stand up to play, grouped in a huddle around the discreet power chords of the theorbo, a lute with an unusually long neck. The gut strings of the period violins and cellos make a wonderful creamy sound on the 17th century repertoire, leading us through the harmonic intricacies of Purcell and William Lawes. Matthew Golici's shifts of harmonic direction are full of enjoyable avant garde ambiguity.

Kokoo present their own 17th century Japanese piece, Chidori, all linear melodies and no harmonies at all. But these are points of contact with the English music; both have a sophisticated formality and unadorned plainness, and neither is particularly concerned with rhythm. Then Nakamura performs an ancient solo piece. Says This is a storming technical display of wild breath sounds and circular breathing, though underlying the pyrotechnics is a meditative calm. The audience receive it with great enthusiasm.

It might be easier to draw a veil over the contemporary part of the programme: *Yuri* (Kakumaru's To The Cherry Blossom) is a double concerto for shakuhachi and violin that mixes

queasy harmonic meanderings with steady sentimentality. Michael Berkeley's specially commissioned Glass Fears burns the Japanese instruments in a breathless rush of activity, which starts to achieve some clarity only in the last two minutes. It's like glimpsing a monk caught up in the rush hour.

Three days later Kokoo have their own showcase at the Spitz club in East London. There are five kotos on stage, looking like breaking waves, and at one point Michiko Yagi mimes swimming through them. Kokoo with "Awan-gaku Japanese Iro" on their posters, and it's an evening of cross-cultural confusion and head-scratching for many of the audience. To present one King Crimson tune arranged for kotos and shakuhachi seems like a neat novelty idea. But to play a whole evening of the stuff – plus Bowie and Enya's "Hallelujah", Pink Floyd's "One of These Days", Hendrix's "Purple Haze" – surely this is kitsch? But at no point do the group acknowledge that their enterprise might be odd in any way. Bowie heard his tune on our Website and ordered our CD," confides Nakamura. We wait for the punchline, but there isn't one, it's just, you know, great that Bowie did that. So bring on a Bowie Inflatable doll and beat the

koto with it? No, that's another gig entirely.

Now, I know the guy who did those parapé Top 20 covers, versions of Spanday Bolet and Duran Duran for pipa and string synth. At least he had the grace to be embarrassed about his success (he used a pseudonym), and as a pipa player you have to be responsive to your audience's requirements to some extent. But Kokoo seem to aspire to that kind of music, aspire to play supermarket music with straight faces. Nakamura's own compositions place melodies that drip sentiment over the harmonic sensibility of bad jazz, supported by a koto ostinato in seven time. Presumably Berndt touches you to write like this. And Nakamura's intention goes away when he plays in these Western scales, the refinement of his traditional playing deserting him entirely. If you're determined to suck, at least do it in time.

The dead hand of the rock guitar solo lays across the music, albeit disguised as shakuhachi improvisation. In fact Kokoo are a Prog rock group in sheep's clothing – Nakamura still digs King Crimson, and the fact that he's working with Japanese traditional instruments is in no way going to stop him paying respect to that music. □

Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.

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Compiled by Phil England



Brigitte Fontaine, Elkehard Ehlers

UK Festivals

DEDBEAT WEEKENDER

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PULSE

LONDON
Concert series celebrating the work of contemporary black jazz artists. The series starts with trumpeter Claude Ooppa directing The African Jazz Explosions All Stars (8), the esteemed Kenny Barron, Her Carter & Billy Cobham trio explore the limits of improvisation in a set of standards and originals (22), and singer Cleveland Walker celebrates the release of his new album with his All Star Big Band (25). The series continues in March with vocalist Owens Reeves revisiting the work of Sarah Vaughan (22) and an appearance by The Master Drummers Of Africa featuring percussionists from 15 countries (31), and concludes in April with Tony Kofi And The Afri-Funk Family (1). London Royal Festival Hall, times and prices vary, 020 7960 4203

RFM MUJO 100

London
The British music magazine's centenary issue concert series continues this month with Stereodub and Brigitte Fontaine (1), High Llamas and Sinner (2), Marc River solo (3) and Elbow Smith & Orchestra (6). London Royal Festival Hall, 020 7960 4242, www.rfm.org.uk



International Festivals

ACTIVATING THE MEDIUM

USA

Performance, installation work, multimedia initiatives and interactive technologies collide at this West Coast digital art event, featuring contributions from Sersohtand, Atau Tanaka, Zbigiew Karkowski and others. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 15-24 February, 001 415 567 4000, www.sfmoma.org

FREQUENCIES (HZ)

GERMANY

Major exhibition and performance series exploring sound, light and perception. The exhibition includes compositions by Paul Sonn's Mina Vaino and Franz Pomesch, politically and socially relevant works by Ultra-re and Farmers

Manual, Mark Bawn exploring the limits of hearing, a large-scale light projection by CM Von Hausswolff, and a site-specific multimedia installation by Christian Nicolai. Alongside the exhibition, Nicolai has curated an extreme performance series which covers the gamut of new electronic music and concentrations on innovative combinations of sound and image. The full listing for the performance series is as follows: Cyclo, Russell Haswell (8 February), Paul Sonn, Ahn Na and Farmers Manual (9), Ryoji Ikeda, Carl Michael Von Hausswolff and Franz Pomesch (10), Pita, Ermossen and Frank Bretschneider (19), and Thomas Körner with Jürgen Reibig (16), Fennec, Opate and Goochipal (22), Monolite, Random Inc and Elkehard Ehlers (23), Markus Schrader, Sternbrüder vs Olab, and Richard Charter (28), Mark (Masami Akita/Zbigiew Karkowski), Florian

Hecker and COH (2 March), Disformation, Marc Behrens and Achim Wolsched (5), Christophe Charles, Stephan Mattheu and Senking (8) and Ultra-re (April, tbc). A catalogue accompanies the exhibition, with a CD including work by all the artists represented in the show. Frankfurter Schm Kesthalle, 9 February-28 April, 00 49 6929 98820, www.schm.de

(K)-RAA-K3

BRUGES/UK

One day festival from this enterprising label featuring Elkehard Ehlers & Joseph Sudy, David Grubbs, Meen, Owen Ambarchi, Wercathedral Orchestra, Who, Irfan, Benjamin Franklin, It & My Computer, Aleg, Toss and Twenty Six, Hasselt Zaal, Brugge, 2 March, 00 32 11 22 4161, www.kraak.net

PERFORMANCE POETRY FESTIVAL

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15 local sound poets present works by Kurt Schwitters, Alvin Lucier, John Cage, Gertrude Stein, William Burroughs as well as their own works using performance, vocal artistry and video. Jerusalem Haifa Performance Art, 21-24 February, 00 972 6720419/20, theartfactory.aqnet.net

THE VISIONS OF ARNOLD

SCHOENBERG

Concert series complemented by a showing of 150 of the Viennese composer's little-known expressionist paintings as well as a screening of films featuring his music. Performances are by Ensemble Modern and others, and the films include Ken Russell's *Dante's Inferno* and Jean-Luc Godard's *Nouvelle Vague*. Frankfurter Schm Kesthalle, 15 February-28 April, 00 49 6929 98820, www.schm.de

WAVELENGTH 100

CANADA

Toronto's weekly alternative music night celebrates its second birthday with this three day event. Featurung Detention (Sam Shalabi/Ale MacSweeney), Gesundheit (members of Go Make Say Thank), Kepler, Skyways, Raising The Fawn, Full White Org, Resonators, Michelle McElaney & Eric Chenaux, I Am Robot And Proud, Blackeyes, Drummer, The Creeping Kobolines and more to be announced. Toronto Clinton's Tavern, B-10 February, 9pm, pay what you can afford, 003 416 533 4515, www.wavelengthtoronto.com

Special Events

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART PROJECT

USA

USA's premier of *Fast N' Bulbous*, the seven-piece Captain Beefheart instrumental tribute group featuring Gary Lucas, arranged and conducted by Phillip Johnston plus rare Beefheart video footage from all phases of his career. The group will also lend musical support to Wire writer Mike Barnes, who crosses the Atlantic to read from his Beefheart biography. New York Knitting Factory, 9 February, 9pm, \$15, 001 212 219 3006, www.knittingfactory.com

BEYOND FREE LOVE

UK

LNC's annual free party with live music in two halls from Improvisers and sonic space pugs Alan Wilkinson & Steve Neble, Carl Beard & Phil Durant, Paul Hood, Dennis Dubostre, Medius, Noise Removers, Rob Astor and others. London Conney Hall, 15 February, 7pm, free, 020 7242 8043, [www.i-m-c.org.uk](http://i-m-c.org.uk)

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A late night of entry to new and innovative electronic musical works and digital arts held throughout 2002. Curated by Lawrence English featuring DJ Burnt Friedman, Pinzon, Renzo, David Shear, Oran Ambauchi & others.

REV new sounds new sources

Music @ Queensland University of Technology (Dr. Andy Arthurs) and Brisbane Powerhouse collaborate with Artistic Director Lindsey Pollack in a festival of installations, performances and new music by local and international sound artists. Line Producer: Fiona Allen featuring Bart Hopkin, Graeme Leek, Scanner, David Toop, Jon Rose, Greg Sheehan, Steve Langton and many others. 4-7 April.

QUEENSLAND SACRED MUSIC FESTIVAL

A festival of spiritual and sacred arts as found in the world's major religions. Curated by Chris Bowen featuring Gyuto Monks of Tibet, Riley Lee, Shubha Mudgal, Whirling Devotees of Turkey and others. 3-6 May.

WORLD BEAT AND GLOBAL GROOVES

World, roots, folk, ethnic, and traditional music concerts and late night events by international, national, and local musicians throughout 2002. Curated by Chris Bowen featuring Mandolin U Shrinivas, Fiddlers Bid, Jaleos Flamenco & Company, Uthom and others.

TOPOLOGY

Forging a new attitude towards chamber music, Topology will present 5 thematic concerts focusing on recent works by today's leading composers on 28 March, 9 May, 13 August, 12 October, 14 December. Featuring works by Michael Gordon, Elena Kats-Chernin, Lynette Pratte, Michael Daugherty, David Lang, Nyman, Part, Ligeti, Adams, Reich, Tom Johnson plus original works.

NEW YORK GIG

An engaging evening with Robyn Archer and Pauli Grzeskowiak on piano. A mix of European repertoire with Australian and new original works. 18-21 April.

THE QUEENSLAND ORCHESTRA

The Powerhouse Series is orchestral music minus the formality and tails. Chief Conductor Michael Christie features works by Vivaldi, Byrnes, Marts, David Montgomery, Brophy, Nancarrow, Mardant, Adams, and Elena Kats-Chernin's Mr Barbeque! featuring Lyndon Terpisch.

NAKED VOICES 2

A community music festival celebrating the diversity of a cappella choral traditions. 11-12 May.

ELISION ENSEMBLE

Elision Ensemble in John Rodgers' Inferno. A nightmarish aural cartography of Dante's vision with projections, live electronics, vegetables, and ice instruments. 6-7 July

MINI MAX

Curated by Vincent Plush. A celebratory investigation of Post-Minimalism in music and text. Featuring visiting composers and artists - Bill Duckworth, DJ Tzarra, Stuart Dempster, Simone de Haan, Warren Burt and including other works by Kyle Gann, Glenn Branca, Saito, Ligeti and Charles Ives. With the support of the Queensland Conservatorium of Music. 30 July - 4 August

AUSTRALYSIS

An international music and intermedia ensemble, creating, performing and producing new work, composed and improvised. Director: Roger Dean. 18-19 October.

THE NECKS

One of the great cult bands of Australia, Chris Abrahams (piano), Tony Buck (drums), and Lloyd Swanton (bass) conjure a chemistry together that defies description. Go to www.the-necks.com for details.

brisbane powerhouse - progression and innovation in the Asia-Pacific

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Gareth Williams Memorial Concert

Charles Bullen • Viv Corringham • David Cunningham • Charles Hayward • Gareth Sager • L. Voag • Wire • plus special guests.

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Thursday 7th March 2002 at 8.00pm. £12.00.

"My body moves forward... This restless mind runs back like a banner that flaps in the wind."



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Newcastle Playhouse
0191 235 5151

Wed 6 **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**
Thoresby Riding Stables, Ollerton
0115 961 9419

Fri 8 **BRACKNELL**
South Hill Park Arts Centre
01344 484123

Sat 9 **COVENTRY**
Warwick Arts Centre
024 7652 4524

Sun 10 **LONDON**
Queen Elizabeth Hall
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Wed 13 **KENDAL**
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**JOAN
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METAMORPHOSIS**

FEATURING WORKS BY **PHILIP GLASS, YOKO ONO,
KAREN TANAKA, STEVE MACKEY, MARK GREY,
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Mon 25 **BRACKNELL** South Hill Park Arts Centre 8pm
01344 484123

Wed 27 **BRIGHTON** Dome (Pavilion Theatre) 8pm
01273 709709

Fri 1 **LONDON** Queen Elizabeth Hall 7.45pm
020 7960 4242 presented by abc

Sun 3 **COVENTRY** Warwick Arts Centre 7.30pm
024 7652 4524



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UN CANE

MORTON FELDMAN COMPOSER PORTRAIT

UK

A rare opportunity to hear Morton Feldman's extraordinary orchestral works. The BBC Symphony Orchestra and BBC Singers perform Violin And Orchestra, Ronco Chapel and Coptic Light London Barbican Hall, 1 February, 7.30pm, with a pre-concert talk (8pm) entitled *The Music of Morton Feldman*, £16-28, 020 7638 8891

LEE RANALDO & RAFAEL TORAL PORTUGAL

Concert by the Sonic Youth guitarist and the Portuguese guitar and electronics pastoralist with visuals by Leah Shigeri and John Paul Feltman to complement the exhibition *Field Trips* by Robert Smithson and *Band* & Hilla Becher Sensors Museum of Contemporary Art, 9 February, 00 351 808 200 543, www.sensors.pt

SEVEN REASONS WHY PERFORMANCE ART SHOULD BE BANNED

UK

Packed multi-arts evening where improvised music meets stand-up comedy, performance art, installation, features such improbably named acts as Chocolate Sandwich, Harry Butter Orchestra, Frank Cenacogenic, Bob McGibbons Raff & Nahn, Christophe Amson and Red Monstro, London's Ryan's Wax Bar, 7 February, 8.30pm, £3, www.limitedhouse22.com

ALAN VEGA: COLLISION DRIVE USA

An exhibition of the Suicide vocalist's extraordinary neon junk souvenirs, his first art show in 20 years, complemented by a gallery performance by the Suicide duo of Vega and Marty Rev (22 February), New York Jefferson Hotel, to 1 March, 001 212 343 7300

LA MONTE YOUNG & MARIAN ZAZEELA

USA

Urging sound and light environment from the ultra-minimalist composer and his light-artist partner, New York MELA Foundation, to 22 June, Thursdays and Saturdays from 2pm-midnight, \$4 contribution, 001 212 925 0270, www.melafoundation.org

On Stage

BIRMINGHAM CONTEMPORARY MUSIC GROUP

The BCGMG's programme of work includes the premiere of Mark Anthony Turnage's 45 minute work *Basin Inventions* written for the great jazz bassist Dave Holland, as well as a new work by Robert Barry, Birmingham CBSO Centre (2), London Barbican (3), Basgnatke The Anvil (5), Cambridge Corn Exchange (6) and Brighton Corn Exchange (7)

MICHAEL BRECKER LARGE ENSEMBLE

The saxophonist's saxophonist, Brecker tours with arranger and multi-instrumentalist Gil Goldstein and ten other leading jazz musicians from the UK and the USA. A CNN tour co-sponsored by The Wire, London Queen Elizabeth Hall (25 February), Cambridge Corn Exchange (26), Basgnatke The Anvil (27), Gashen Gala Theatre (28), Birmingham Symphony Hall (1 March), www.contrabass.org.uk

URI CANE ENSEMBLE: MAHLER REIMAGINED

Playful reinterpretation – partly affectionate, partly irreverent – of Gustav Mahler by pianist Cane and his group, London Purcell Room, 9 February, 7.30pm, £12.50, 020 7960 4242, www.lfrh.org.uk

CENTROZOOON

Axa Markus Reuter and Berndt Westenholz, two German musicians using processed touch guitar plus rhythmic modulations, Tyne & Wear Bubble Arts Centre (23 February), Exeter Phoenix (26), www.DIN.org.uk

OILATE PEOPLE

Fresh from the release of their second album *Expansion Room*, LA's HipHop maestros return to the UK for a series of live dates, Manchester Hop & Grape (4 February), Brighton Concorde (5), Bristol Thekla (7), London Astoria (9), NME Bass Show supporting Bubba Sparxxx, Glasgow King Tuts (11)

OURUTTI COLUMN

Vini Reilly's guitar gently weeps London Jazz Cafe, 18 February, 020 7916 6060

ROGER ENO & FRIENDS

Brian's sibling performs a solo concert in celebration of a new album release on the online label Burning Shed. Also appearing are Robbie's Mark Beazley, No-Man's Tim Bowness with pianist Peter Chivers, and German electronics group Centrotone, Norwich Assembly House, 28 February, £7.50, 01363 660352, www.burningshed.com

FAIRPORT CONVENTION

Legendary English folkies celebrate their 35th anniversary with Watson, Carthy and Vicki Clayton providing support, London Royal Festival Hall, 14 February, 020 7960 4242, www.rfh.org.uk

FARIDA & IRAQI MAQAM ENSEMBLE

Distinguished Iraqi vocal and her group perform music from the most difficult genre within the Iraqi song tradition, Belfast Al Cultural, 7 February, Bpm, £8/£5, 028 252 8816, www.moeingomusic.co.uk

FOUR

CO lunch gig for the improvising quartet of Larry Stabbins, Howard Riley, Terry Wren and Mark Sanders, London St Cyprian's Church, 9

February, 7.45pm, £7, 020 7258 0724

FRAKTURE BIG BAND WITH EVAN PARKER

Improvising saxophonist Evan Parker features as soloist in a new composition, *The Chas Concerto* by Phil Hargreaves. The piece was written for Evan and the large improvising FBB, which also features guests Cascine Kraszel on saxophone and John Edwards on bass, Liverpool Bluecoat Arts Centre, 18 February, Bpm, £5/£4, 0151 709 5297, www.fekart.com/ekserve.co.uk

FRIDGE

Sub-zero space rock, Cork Triskel Arts Center (28 February), Dublin Shelter at Vicar St (1 March with Jimmy Behan), Belfast Aunts Annex (3), Glasgow King Tuts (4, with Capitol K), Manchester Roadhouse (5, with Capitol K), London Scala (5, with Capitol K and Mantoba), Bristol Louisiana (7, with Capitol K and Mantoba), www.brunswick.com/fridge

FO BATMAN

Improvising maverick with a Dada sensibility, Hugh Metcalf, with group, embarks on a nationwide tour to coincide with the release of *oh oh AH* on his revived Klinker Zounds label. Hugh describes the group's music as "Metaphysic/Balinese Free Rock". Lancaster Yorkshire House Pub (23 with The Collective Jeniffer), Sheffield The Grapes (24, with Mick Beck)

NICK HAPPER

The son of legendary folk rocker Roy plays a Weimar's Day special, London Spitz, 14 February, Bpm, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz.co.uk

INSTANT MUSIC MEETING: DIALOGUE

International multimedia improvisation meeting with UK debuts from No-Neck Blues Band members Tomio Shirai on sax and Michio Takahashi on percussion, Berlin based saxophone and computer player Thomas Akerblom, Kyoto based Butoh dancer Kei Mai, www.iimm.org

Out There

UK pianist Steve Beresford, Shigeto Wada on computer, and scopac presenting live video. London October Galery, 23 February, 7.30pm, £7.50, 020 7831 1618

BRIAN IRVINE ENSEMBLE

Seattle's 13 piece romps through reconstructions of standards, haiku settings of her Cyber poems, mechanical music and reflections on a skipping Astronaut. Among other things, tenor sax English saxophonist Paul Dunmall is the group's guest soloist. Glasgow The Arches (10), Newcastle Upon Tyne The Chez (11), Leeds The Wardrobe (12), Nottingham Djanogly Theatre (13), Lakeside Arts Centre (14), Birmingham Midlands Arts Centre (16), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (17).

JOAN JEANRENAUD: METAMORPHOSIS

Ex-Koros Quartet collect toys with a multimedia programme which includes collaborations with five video artists. Works include an arrangement of Philip Glass's piano piece Metamorphosis alongside newly commissioned works from Yoko Ono, Karen Tanaka, Hamza El Din and Steve Mackey. A CMM tour co-sponsored by The Mike Becknell Hill Park Arts Centre (25 February), Brighton Dome (27), London Queen Elizabeth Hall (1 March), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (3), www.cmmarts.org.uk

KD PINSKI & KONIKIEWICZ

Harmolodics a go-go. Easter Phoenix, 24 February, 8pm, £8, 01922 667080

MISHA MENGELBERG

The great Dutch piano virtuoso plays a solo set supported by fellow way coasters Guss Jansen and Brian Kellock. Glasgow CCA, 15 February, 8pm, 0850 0142 352 4900

OZOMATLI

LA's monstrous Latin/HipHop super crew. London

Royal Festival Hall, 8 February, £15/£12.50, 020 7960 4242, www.rfh.org.uk

PANDAEMONIUM

The unmissable improvising quartet of Alex Ward, Pat Thomas, Steve Noble and John Edwards. Reading Riung Sun Arts Centre, 1 February, 8pm, £9, 0118 986 6788

FRANK PERRY

Recessional, Perry explores Tibetan singing bowls in a performance titled 'The Ancient Power of Sound' (23 February, 8pm, £5) and a workshop, 'Healing And Harmonics' (24, 11am-5pm, £35). Open The Abode, 01235 847401

QUATUOR ACCORDE +

POCO CLARINET TRIO

Improvising string quartet of Tony Wren, Mark Westcott, Charlotte Bell and Phil Gurnett with the clarinet trio of Alex Ward, Mindy Liss and Chris Candy, who launch a new CD on Slem Records. London Red Rose Club, 5 February, 8pm, £5, 020 7263 2265. Poco also play London Sound 323, 23 February, 2pm, free, 020 8348 8956

RADIO TARIFA

Rich mixture of flamenco and Arabic traditional music. London Royal Festival Hall (15 with Rose Noel & Adam Pedrosa), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (17), Leicester Curve/Mermaid Hall (18).

JOHN SURMAN & JACK DEJOHNNETTE WITH LONDON BRASS

The two jazz greats in a collaboration with the ten-piece brass ensemble featuring new music, written by brass soloists. Southampton Turner Sims Theatre (3), Manchester Royal Northern College of Music (5), Birmingham Admira Hall (6).

DAVID THOMAS & TWD PALE BOYS

Paul Tbs frontman and his modscrape sidekicks, currently on tour. York Fibbers (8 February), 8pm, £4, 01922 667080

ARTIE SHAW & THE ARTIE SHAW ORCHESTRA

Artie Shaw and his band play a mix of swing, jazz and blues. London Royal Albert Hall, 11 February, 8pm, £15, 020 7960 4242

ROY HODGESON

One of the last great rockabilly vocalists. London Royal Albert Hall, 12 February, 8pm, £15, 020 7960 4242

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John Turville and his ensemble play a mix of classical and contemporary music. London Royal Albert Hall, 20 April, 8pm, £15, 020 7960 4242

JOHN TURVILLE & THE ENSEMBLE

John Turville and his ensemble play a mix of classical and contemporary music. London Royal Albert Hall, 21 April, 8pm, £15, 020 7960 4242

JOHN TURVILLE & THE ENSEMBLE

John Turville and his ensemble play a mix of classical and contemporary music. London Royal Albert Hall, 22 April, 8pm, £15, 020 7960 4242

JOHN TURVILLE & THE ENSEMBLE

John Turville and his ensemble play a mix of classical and contemporary music. London Royal Albert Hall, 23 April, 8pm, £15, 020 7960 4242

JOHN TURVILLE & THE ENSEMBLE

John Turville and his ensemble play a mix of classical and contemporary music. London Royal Albert Hall, 24 April, 8pm, £15, 020 7960 4242

JOHN TURVILLE & THE ENSEMBLE

John Turville and his ensemble play a mix of classical and contemporary music. London Royal Albert Hall, 25 April, 8pm, £15, 020 7960 4242

JOHN TURVILLE & THE ENSEMBLE

John Turville and his ensemble play a mix of classical and contemporary music. London Royal Albert Hall, 26 April, 8pm, £15, 020 7960 4242

JOHN TURVILLE & THE ENSEMBLE

John Turville and his ensemble play a mix of classical and contemporary music. London Royal Albert Hall, 27 April, 8pm, £15, 020 7960 4242

JOHN TURVILLE & THE ENSEMBLE

John Turville and his ensemble play a mix of classical and contemporary music. London Royal Albert Hall, 28 April, 8pm, £15, 020 7960 4242

(22), Tres Mi Bar, Lennon Quay, Saturdays, 8pm onwards, fee, £13.25/37.50s, www.deconstruct.co.uk

DEKEDEX

HipHop and drum 'n' bass night, J-Uve, Adams E, Keast, Shy FX, OJ SS and more. London Mass, 8 February, 8/8/02 before 11pm/£10 after, 020 7737 1016

EAT YOUR OWN EARS

Jazz Fudge label night with the HipHop freez Dark Carter and label boss Sreeman playing an eclectic mix on the decks. London 93 Feet East, 16 February, 8pm-2am, £10/£8, (020 247 3293, www.93feeteast.co.uk

EXACUMULUM

This month's name for The Bohman Brothers' Impov space, Caroline Kraabel, Charlotte Hug & John Edwards trio and Mark Wastell & Phil Durant duo (4), Deby Robinson & Steve Noble duo and Ross Lintern & Adam Bohman duo (11), Loi Comell, Krut Auerleinen, Steve Beresford & Sash Washington (18), Andrew Sparling & Rhonix Davies duo, Phil Weston solo, Ien Cheshire and friends (25). London Upstarts at the Bannington Centre, Bexley, 8/4/02, 01932 571323

FABRIC LIVE

All B album launch with Howe B live plus Ois John Peet, Ross Allen, Ali B, James Lavelle, Plump, Fabo, Bassy, Adam F, OJ One, Kenny Ken, J Majik and Wax Magic (1 February), UKLIVE, Scratches Perverts, Barber & Tommie Irie, Krust and Portishead's Gorillaz (8), Jazazzoo, James Lavelle, Station Warriors, Grooverider, Ron Size and Fabo (15), Greenerever, Distinctive Records, Hynd live and Fye Nasty (22). London Fabric, 10pm-1am, £12/£10, 020 7336 8998, www.fabric-london.com

THE INVISIBLE COLLEGE

Launch gig for La Recordings' 'Because You're Funky compilation, with Danny Breaks and The Rustler dishing out acid rock, heavy soul and general weirdness. London Shred, 14 February, 8pm-midnight, www.larecordings.com

KEEP IT UNPEEL

The popular and eclectic Mr Scruff returns. London 93 Feet East, 8 February, 8pm-2am, £5 before 10pm/£10 after, 020 7247 3293, www.93feeteast.co.uk

KOSMISCHE

Weaversfield live, plus a 60 set from Isan, sitting inside a Krautrock disco. London Upstarts at the Garage, 23 February, 8pm-3am, £6/£5, 020 7607 1818, www.kosmische.org

KLINKER

Longstanding off-the-wall Impov club. Each night this month features a new film by club banner Hugo Minciello. Confirmed at the time of going to press: Nig Birch & The Flea Pit Orchestra, Loi Comell & Mike Water duo and New Hawkins (7), Phil Minson & Bob Cobbing, Ye Basta with Wils, Rob Murphy No Gestha and Klinker forteller Cath (14), Free Bass trio of Alan Wilkinson, Marco Mattes & Steve Noble, The Nipole-less Ties and Yumi Hara (21), Ian Smith, Pat Thomas, Alex Ward & Matti Marz (23), The Ghetty and Walking Wounded (23). These Records presents The Bermuda Triangle an evening of interruptions, disappearances of sound, film, hypnosis, poetry and sonnambulism (28). London Sussex, Brixton, 8/4/02, 020 8806 8216, www.klinkerreserve.co.uk

NESH

The Warp Records night returns with Christian Fennesz, Venetian Sirens, Götgel Goon, Mark

Bell from LF0, Mike Paradines and Herp DJs London Electrowerkz, 15 February, 11pm-3am, £10, 0207 837 6419, www.warprecords.com

PLASTIC PEOPLE REGGAE NIGHTS

Saxon Studio and Lloyd Brown (1 February),

Gerris Bowl live 5/2 and The Saal Jazz Sound

System (8), Bobo Digital and Pete Holdsworth

(15), Mark Iron Honest Jon's (22), Aswan

Shewood live dub event featuring Ghetto Priest

(1 March), www.plasticpeople.co.uk

SEEN

Honore Records and r0u present Latin soul and

electro boogaloo with special guests IG Culture and resident DJs. Bristol Level, 15 February,

8pm-2am, £5, 0117 973 0473

THE SPROUTLAW

Valentine's Day special for the Internet bar, monthly. Minimal laptop set from Edinburgh-based CK Diesel. Hanoi plus Krautrock and psychodelia from Jim Bachman, and glitch, beats and soundscapes from residents Douglas Bentall and Br Tonie. Visuals by Waveform, London Clubhouse, 14 February, 13:30pm-midnight, £4/£3, 0207 287 2242, www.clubhouse.co.uk/sproutlaw/

STRUCTURE

Dark drum 'n' bass, HipHop and low end experimental breaks. Dan & Roland, Rob Payton, Cayte, Rescal & Krome, Compristor project, HAZE, USER, FACE, MC Shydeee, Blasphemous, Essar, Johnny Ransome, Stefan, Sean Mcduffy and Lytal. London 93 Feet East, 19 January, 8pm-3am, £5 before 10 pm/£10 after/£15, 020 7336 2025, www.structure.co.uk

VORTEX

Nightly jazz in a North London bar. This month's highlights include Gary Crosby's Nu Trop (2), Evan Parker Trio (6), Anne Whitehead (8) and Jon Lloyd Quintet (18). London Vortex, 020 7254 6516

WORLD ROOTS

World Music professor and Radio presenter Lucy Quyan hosts a new World Beat night along with Ray Price and Max Reinhardt. London Market Place, 14 February and every second Thursday of the month, 8pm-1am, 020 7079 2020

Incoming

ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES

USA

Rescheduled and enlarged Sonic Youth-curated festival, featuring Boxedsons, Ron Astvan & The Steegs, Cannibal Ox, Dead C, Tony Conrad, Television, Steeplech, Sonic Youth, Jackie O Motherfucker, Blue Man, Cecil Taylor, Peaches, Pits, Sleater-Kinney, Kevin Drumm, Leon Singer and many more. Los Angeles, UCLA, 14-17 March, \$100, www.alltomorrowsparties.co.uk

ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES

UK

Curated by Steve Albini and featuring Shellac, The Fall, Low, Tom Verlaine, Mett Banana, Bonnie Prince Billy, Wine, Zeta Geva, The Breeders and others. Cambridge Hobart Centre, 19-21 and 26-28 April, £100, www.alltomorrowsparties.co.uk

DON BYRON

UK

New York clarinetist tours with a daytime programme for children, Bug Music For Juniors, and an evening programme for the grown-ups. You Are@ More Music For Sa Musicians. Bristol

Armenia (7 March), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (9/10), Birmingham MAC (10-11), London Barbican (12), Leeds The Briggait (13), Mermaid Leisure Centre (14), Brighton Corn Exchange (15), Southampton Turner Sims Concert Hall (16)

ANDREW CRONSHAW: ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE GREAT BEAR

UK

A wild evocation of the ancient music of the Iberian North, from Finland to Siberia, on a tour sponsored by The Wire. Newcastle Playhouse (5 March), Oulton Thoresby Riding Stables (6), Bradwell South Hill Park Arts Centre (8), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (9), London Queen Elizabeth Hall (10), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (13), www.cronshaw.org.uk

DOMINO FESTIVAL

BELGIUM

Annual festival this year featuring Godspeed You Black Emperor, Do Make Say Think, DAT Politics, Lambchop and Mike Ladd Live, as well as DJ sets, label showcases, screenings and an exhibition of sleeve art taken from The Wire's 2001 Invisible London expo. Brussels Aantheure Belgique, 10-21 April, www.b2bconcerts.be

OBLIQUES LU NIGHTS

FRANCE

Good looking two day festival featuring Michael Gira, People Like Us, Isol, Bensouci, Bleach From Bleachton, Irmh Schmidt & Kurna, John Oswald, Jim Thirlwell & Jim Coleman, Fuckhead and more. Nantes La Lu Unique, 22-23 March, www.lejeu.com

ONLY CONNECT

UK

London Barbican Centre's annual series of new collaborations and special projects. Mananah Faithfull with ganes (10 March), John Zorn world premiere of The Guit (25 March), Mu: Music featuring Mell Baccari and Oamen Alsem (26), Jon Hassell/Villalobos/Ba Baaba Mu (5 April), Craig Armstrong (7), Bo La Terro: The Sounds Of Science (10), Sigur Ros & Hilmars Órn Hilmarsson: Odins Raven Magic (21), Mouse On Mars, Ces, Fred (27) London Barbican, times and prices vary, 020 7638 8891, www.barbican.org.uk/onlyconnect

OTHER MINDS FESTIVAL #8

USA

Three days of concerts and artist forums, featuring Lou Harrison, Pauline Oliveros, Ellen Fullman, Anna Lockwood and Richard Teitelbaum, San Francisco various venues, 7-9 March, 001 415 382 4400, www.otherminds.org

GARETH WILLIAMS MEMORIAL CONCERT

UK

To mark the recent sudden passing of the former This Heat bandleader, a special concert including fellow This Heat members Charles Bulkin and Charles Hayward, a reformed Wim膀s friends and collaborations with Cunningham, David Cunningham, Gareth Sager, L. Voss, plus special guests. London 93 Feet East, 7 March, Brixton, £12, 020 7247 3293, www.93feetstreet.co.uk

Did There Ever



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[February 2002]

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THE FEARLESS ISSUE

[March 2002]
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Phil Durrant
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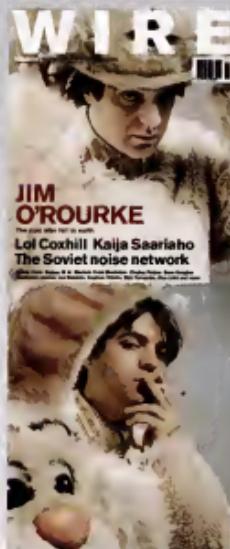
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Kim Horday, Jazzykimmer, Jagi Jaz, Alexander Rehberg, Lasse Marhaug, Dekra Nova, Martin Honteleit, Su Delpennin and Monopet

Brief history

When it was 17 and living in Renskefjord, Norway I released tapes by living in Renskefjord. When I moved to Oslo this operation became more serious with vinyl and CD releases. I soon made contact with new artists, venues and booking agents, and based on this network I created the profile and style of the label

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Epiphanies

**Popol Vuh founder
Florian Fricke died
in December.
Guitarist Gary Lucas
salutes a pioneer
whose music
affected his own life**

Florian Fricke pictured recently in Mexico

The camera swoops godlike through the clouds, zooming in on a line of Spanish conquistadors threading their way carefully down a Peruvian mountainside, like a line of soldier ants. In the 8th Street Playhouse in Manhattan's West Village, I sit crouched in the darkness, spellbound by this celluloid spectacle, my ears filled with the sound of a heavenly choir chanting a wordless, dirge-like hymn to what sounds like the darkest forces of Nature, a hymn that soars to the peaks of the Andes, shaking the rafters of the cinema. Underpinning the awesome majesty of this hypnotic vocalese is a mournful minimalist guitar figure that repeats insistently in a kind of tidal ebb and flow, at one with the angelic swirling soundscape. The year is 1978. The film is *Aguirre, The Wrath Of God*. I am about to have my eyes forced wide by the genius of director Werner Herzog. And my ears opened forever by the ineffable beauty of the music of Florian Fricke and his group Popol Vuh.

I have come to treasure every soundtrack Fricke supplied for the singular visions of Herzog (see also: *Aguirre*, *The Enigma Of Kaspar Hauser*, *Nosferatu*, *Heart Of Glass*, *Pizzicato* and *Cobra Verde*). The man seemed born specifically for the role of translating Herzog's mysterious *Weltanschauung* into the most brilliant, heartstopping film music ever. It is at once medieval and modern, sacral and worldly, an aura of incense mingling with the poisoned perfume of Herzog's garden of unearthly delights.

Realising the group formed an important chapter I'd somehow missed in the Krautrock saga, the soundtracks prompted me to seek out as many pre-Herzog Popol Vuh releases as I could. At that point I was fairly well versed in the German Progressive music canon, but Florian Fricke and his shadowy, mystical group Popol Vuh (their name derived from the creation story of the Quiché Maya) had eluded me – up until that fateful screening.

Originally a trio, Popol Vuh were founded in 1969 by former music critic Fricke, the classically trained son of an opera singer, in Munich. In 1970 the group could boast the first ever German usage of the mighty Moog III. Oddly enough, they began their performing career with well received appearances in 1971 on the formerly British music dominated TV programme *Beat Club*.

Popol Vuh's 1970 synth classic *Affenstunde* (literally *Hour Of The Monkeys* – perhaps a prophetic prod to Werner Herzog for the ending of his *Aguirre* film), featured the original great two line-up of Fricke on Moog, Holger Trulzsch on percussion and Frank Fiedler

on synth and mixdown. Since that first album, Popol Vuh have gone on to release nearly 30 official albums, remakes and compilations, on vinyl and CD (*Affenstunde* alone has been rereleased in eight different configurations on myriad labels worldwide).

With its spacious, glowing music, played on a bastardised church organ and retrofitted with tape loops of voices and other instruments, including a homemade Melotron-like instrument, Aguirre's transcendental main title theme, "Lacrima Di Re" ("The Tears Of The King"), remains for many the eternal Fricke calling card. But for me his greatest, most numinous composition is his opening title music to Herzog's 1978 recreation of Mumau's silent vampire classic, *Nosferatu* – a piece known as "Hörte, Du Wagnst" ("Listen, You Who Dare"), which plays as the camera lingers on opened sepulchres, their nummified contents beckoning and grimacing in a death-mummified death.

These two Fricke themes – among the finest film music ever composed – so burned themselves into my brain that I felt compelled, commanded, even, by some unknown spint to cover them on solo guitar, in my own style, on two of my own albums. I recorded both pieces at home, live in my living room, on an extremely gloomy, snowbound whiteout of a late afternoon winter's day, in an absolute trance. Fricke's music has, and continues to exert, a profound effect on me.

The excellent 1993 *Best Of Popol Vuh* CD compilation on Milan contains excerpts of most of the best bits from all the Herzog films, plus some more of their greatest hits, and is heartily recommended to all Popol Vuh beginners. It includes the main title music from *Fitzcarraldo*, whose Orff-like feversharp and over the top bass percussion will give your neighbour a heart attack, if you crank it up loud enough. But after this, I most favour the early music of the primal, pre-acoustic Popol Vuh trio, particularly their second album, *In Den Gärten Pharaohs* (*In The Gardens Of Pharaoh*). Fricke, Fiedler and Trulzsch seamlessly meld the natural sounds of lapping waves, some sci-fi electronica and theremin quavers, and assorted Turkish percussion into an audio vortex, a whirling maelstrom of spacy ethno-sounding passages, some of which got recycled in *Nosferatu*.

Even better is *In Den Gärten's* side two: the 19 minute "Vuh", recorded live in a cathedral in Bamberg, Bavaria, where Fricke holds his own in a monochordal tranced-out jam with startling affinities to The Velvet Underground's epochal "Sister Ray". Like

John Cole, Fricke keeps the superior firepower of his *In* reserve, choosing his moments carefully to surprise and overtake his conferees in a Sun-Tzu kind of strategy. The 1983 CD reissue of *In Den Gärten* on Celestial Harmonies adds the *Aguirre* theme to the package and closes with a breathtaking solo piano meditation by Fricke entitled "Spirit Of Peace", which seems to emanate from some other realm. Florian Fricke was definitely hotwired to the cosmos – it's delicate and dreamy without succumbing to any namby-pamby Windham Hill horseshit. The real New Age starts here.

And thus we come to 1973's *Seligspreitung* (*Beartrutes*), and 1974's *Einsinger & Sprengeljäger*, both *Kosmische* music releases. For many, these are the classic Popol Vuh albums. They're colled, devotional mantras that unwind with inexorable logic; in the best Prog tradition, their numerous movements, time changes and harmonic shifts climax grandly or merely sputter out in media res.

With texts drawn from St Matthew's Gospel, the former album delineates Fricke's esemplastic spirit if nothing else; and the latter codifies the most rockist phase of Popol Vuh, with Daniel Fichelscher's ragga heroics to the fore. Eastern music was a constant throughout Fricke's career: in 1976, for instance, he recorded an album called *Yoga* with a number of Indian musicians.

His subsequent recordings introduced a kinder, gentler sound palette, often bringing in sacred texts and employing ethnic instrumental combinations. He never totally abandoned his electronic roots, and his later 90s albums included loops, machine gun beats and found sounds. Still, the acoustic piano beckoned – in 1990 he actually released a solo album devoted to Mozart, played straight on a *Bösendorfer*.

Sadly, Florian Fricke died on 29 December at his home in Munich, following a stroke that befell him just before Christmas. A three volume trilogy of past work is still in the planning stages; however, the first album of this, a remix/reissue entitled *Future Sound Experiences*, has just been released on Mystic Records. But to hell with titles, provenance, reutilisation/recycling of the past in the continuum of Fricke's œuvre, it's the spectral (truly a justified adjective here) ability of this haunting music to blur the boundaries of time and space that makes me mourn the tragic loss the world of music has suffered with his untimely death. □ Florian Fricke, musician, composer, born 23 February 1944, died 29 December 2001.



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This month



With this month's issue of *The Wire*, all subscribers worldwide received a free copy of *Sample This*, an exclusive compilation from the Chicago Hefty label

The Hefty label is a vital component in Chicago's sonic underworld, issuing records which connect the city's vibrant post-rock and electronica communities with its history as a centre for freewheeling avant jazz. Specially compiled for *The Wire*, and given away to all the magazine's subscribers this month, *Sample This* is an exclusive compilation featuring 13 tracks lifted from the label's recent releases by Teflon Tel Aviv, Slicker, Phil Ranelin, Beneath Autumn Sky, John Hughes, Twine, Sawath-Savalas, RetinaIt, The Aluminum Group and Samadha Trio. For more information on the Hefty label, go to www.heftyrecords.com

Next month



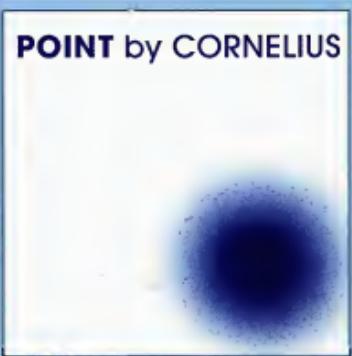
With next month's issue of *The Wire*, all subscribers worldwide will receive a free copy of an exclusive compilation marking this year's Domino festival

Organised and hosted by Brussels's Ancienne Belgique venue, the annual Domino festival is now an established node on Europe's new music network. In the words of the organisers: "Musically we search outside the margins of today's pop music. In music terms: avant-hop, turntablism, clicks + cuts, alternative Country, drum 'n' bass, electronica; basically acts/artists that have their own identity..." The line-up for this year's event, which takes place between 10-21 April, includes Godspeed You Black Emperor, Do Make Say Think, DAT Politics, Lambchop and Mike Ladd, as well as two nights of Belgian electronica, label showcases, video screenings and an exhibition of sleeve art culled from *The Wire's* 2001 Invisible London expo. To mark the festival, the organisers have compiled a special 15 track CD, featuring contributions from Cannibal Ox, King Tubby, Fridge, Do Make Say Think, Le Tigre and others, which will be given away exclusively to all *The Wire's* subscribers with the March 2002 issue. Full details of the CD and festival will be included in next month's issue. In the meantime, for more information on Domino go to www.abconcerts.be

Sample This and **Domino** are the latest instalments in an ongoing series of CDs which are specially produced for *The Wire* and given away to all the magazine's subscribers worldwide. These CDs are only available to subscribers, and are not on sale with the magazine in the shops. If you are not yet a subscriber you can still get your hands on copies of both CDs by taking out a new subscription to *The Wire* this month. Just turn to page 90 or go to www.thewire.co.uk

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